

WILLIAMSON SETTLEMENT, ORANGE COUNTY, TEXAS

Williamson Settlement did not exist until the first Mormon Sunday School was organized in 1902. The church records show that it was written Cole Settlement when William and Joissine were baptized in 1900.

In the Beginning

By Arlen Williamson Portie first published in The Log Church, 1980 with excerpts from an article written by Arlen in Las Vegas, volume V, No. 3, July 1979, pp. 3-15, edited for this publication by Virginia Portie Fawcett

William Williamson: Community Leader, Civil War Veteran, and Homesteader

The Williamson Settlement began in 1867 when Louisiana native, William Williamson (August 15, 1829-November 27, 1900) and his wife Joissine Desmarais (March 26, 1838-March 5, 1912) bought homestead rights and a log house in Orange, County, Texas. They later legally identified this 160-acre tract of land as the William Williamson Survey. William was born in Morgan City, Louisiana to George and Anna Jane Thayer Williamson, Scotch-Irish immigrants.

As a young man, William worked as a cowhand on a large Louisiana ranch owned by Billy Moore. While there, he met and married Joissine Desmarais in Welch, Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana on December 12, 1854. They made their home in nearby Lacassine. Here six of their fifteen children were born: Emelia (1855-1904), George (March 11, to October 26, 1857), William (1858-1862), Mary Jane (1860-1861), William Jasper (1862-1940), and Melissa Ann (1864-1913).

At the age of 33, William enlisted in the Confederate Army. He served as a member of Captain Bailey Vicents Company Scouts and Guards

from September 1862 to May 1865. This unit originated in Louisiana. Serving in the cavalry was logical for William as he had done a great amount of riding and knew horsemanship. Family tradition holds that he rode off to war and returned at its close on his own faithful horse. William served as a scout and was often on the skirmish lines.

After the close of the Civil War, at age 36, William moved his family by wagon from Louisiana to the Northern most part of Orange County in Southeast Texas, just south of the Jasper County line near the present State Highway 105. The other nine children were born here: Lusetia Tibitha (1869-1931), Abel David (1871-1896), Louisa (1873-1877), Joseph Walter (1874-1955), Calvin Christopher C. (1875-1956), Zillie Ann (1877-1965), Absolom Warren (1879-1890), and Epsie Burr (1881-1958). This little community, nestled in the pine trees of upper north Orange County and extreme lower south Jasper County, subsequently became known as the Williamson Settlement.

Joissine was a many-generation Catholic. Yet, she married a non-Catholic. She had her two oldest children and maybe subsequent babies, christened in the Catholic Church. When they moved to Texas, the only religion there was Baptist. She, her oldest and youngest daughters, some grandsons, and maybe others of the family, joined that church. She often tried to get William to be baptized, but he would always answer, "When you get there, I'll be waiting for you."

William and his children played a vital part in the development and stability of the new community. Their home served as the community gathering place for socials and church meetings. William stood for public education. He sent his children to school under adverse conditions and served as a school trustee as have a number of his sons and other descendants.

William was generous with his time and meager possessions, always ready to help a neighbor in need. He and his family were typical of the pioneers who made Texas great. William and Joissine took a Mr. Busley

into their home until his death. While living with the Busley talked a lot about meeting the Mormons while serving in Johnson's Army during the Utah War. Busley said that he was a member of the party that accompanied the Peace Commission into Salt Lake City.

A...Well, while this fellow Busley was staying here at my father's house, he took awfully sick and died. But before he died, he told him that he found Brigham Young to be a mighty fine man. He said Brigham Young was not only a good man, but that he was a good and wise leader and that all the people were happy and prosperous. He told my father this and my father listened and did some thinking and finally way off here in Texas he decided that if he ever got the chance he would join that church . . . @

Mormon Missionaries

At noontime on January 9, 1900, two Mormon missionaries wearily made their way up the long lane that led to Williams's front door. William, looking out the window, exclaimed, "Them's my men!" Elders James G. Reed and Joseph A. Brooks were missionary companions in the South Texas Conference of the Southwestern States Mission, headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri. They were assigned to labor in Jasper County. The following account is taken from Elder Brooks' Journals:

Mon. 8 Jan 1900 - "It was still a little cloudy but had not rained much. . . . We decided to go down in the lower part of the county and try to get through with it before it rained as it was very low and swampy. We stopped all night with a widow lady by the name of Coffin."

Tues. 9 Jan 1900 - "...The Post Office was there. The place was called Weiss Bluff. We mailed our reports. It had rained some the night before and it was very cloudy that morning. The lady started us out on a road but we got lost. We could not see the sun so lost our direction but finally came out all right. We came to a place. The man's name was

Williamson. He was a very nice old gentleman. This was out dinner time. We took dinner with him. He asked us if we would not stop and preach for them that night. We had got a little out of county and into Orange county but we told them that we would preach. We had a very good time."

Wed. 10 Jan 1900 - "When we got up in the morning it was raining. It continued nearly all day and most of the night. At night slacked up a little. A few of the neighbors came in and we held a meeting at the same place. We stopped over night with the same man we did the night before, with Mr. Williamson."

Thurs. 11 Jan 1900 - "The next morning the weather had cleared up but it was so wet and muddy that we could not travel. We were in a low, swampy country anyhow. We stopped all day and night with a son-in-law of Williamson's by the name of W. C. Baker."

Fri. 12 Jan 1900 - "The next day we decided to go on a ways further. Mr. Williamson said he was going up to his daughter's. She lived on our road so he went along with us. But when we got there we found out a big marsh was so high that we could not cross. Mr. Williamson asked us to come back and stop over with him until after Sunday. We did so."

Sat 13 Jan 1900 - "The weather was then clear but it was very wet and muddy. It was Sunday. There was preaching there that day. The preacher wanted us to take part with him. He was a freewill Baptist. We had a very good meeting. After [the] meeting we went back to Mr. Williamson's and stayed the remainder of the day and night."

Mon. Jan 15 1900 - "The next day it had clouded up a little. We decided to get out of that part of the country before it rained any more. One of Mr. Williamson's sons said he would haul us across that big marsh. We were very thankful to him for his kindness to us. Otherwise we would have had to wade it and that would have been very disagreeable. We left

that settlement with some very earnest investigators. They were very well pleased with our belief. . . ."

Those living in the Williamson's home with William and Joissine then were: Jasper with his three motherless children Edna, Maggie, and Abbie; Melissa, Joseph, Calvin, Zillie, and Epsie. All the family was thrilled to have the Elders visit their home.

They assigned Elder Reed a new companion, Elder Thomas Reucher. Orange County was opened as missionary territory and they were assigned there. They went when possible and taught the Williamson family. They also taught the married Williamson children and their families, Emelia, Paren, and Lusetia.

On 20 Apr. 1900 William was baptized by Elder Reed and confirmed by Elder Reucher. They baptized Joissine also, making their posterity heirs of their conversion. They were the first Mormons in Orange County or the neighboring counties of Jefferson, Jasper, or Newton. Their baptisms were the beginning of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Southeast Texas.

Ten of William and Joissine's children grew to adulthood; nine were living when the Gospel message came; eight married and established homes on the homestead property or near by, or subsequently returned to the area; and seven later had children of their own. All these children and adult grandchildren joined the Church during their lifetimes. His son's marriages brought the following family names to join that of Williamson: Baker, Myers, Flurry, Morrison and Christman. The marriages of his daughters added the following names: Cole, Baker, Treme and Wright.

The Williamson family, with their in-law kin, constituted most the early Church membership here. They formed a small but united group amid great prejudices and became the Mormon pioneers of the Southeast Texas area. Their descendants still make up most of the membership of the present Williamson First and Second Wards.

About four or five months after their baptism, William and Joissine moved with their family to Old Laurel where Joseph and Calvin were working. Nevertheless, the Williamson Settlement remained their home. They had moved to be near a company doctor since William was in such poor health. Upon William's death on November 21, 1900, his body was taken back home by horse and wagon and buried in the Williamson graveyard, the site he had chosen and where two of his sons lay buried.

The Log Church

In 1901, the log church of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was Araised@ and had its beginning. The site of is first Mormon church house in the Southeast Texas area was just south of the family graves in the present Williamson cemetery. It was nestled among the thick virgin pines. In the not too distant past, wild animals, including black bears, had roamed the area.

The nearest home was Jasper's, only a short distance east of the west edge of the Williamson homestead.

Members of the Williamson family and other church members built the log church, the traveling Elders and a few neighbor volunteers. It faced south with a gable and high-pitched roof of hand-hewn cypress shingles protruding about three feet over its front steps. There was no porch. It had a homemade plank front door and two shutter-type windows about two and a half foot square. It was cold in the Winter and hot in the Summer. There was no fencing. Cattle grazed nearby and hogs slept underneath, leaving fleas behind. There was no stove for warmth and no water or toilet facilities.

The furnishings were simple and homemade from good lumber. There were about ten long benches for seating and one half-size bench was placed behind the handmade pulpit. Jasper Williamson donated a small table placed near the back wall. It served as the secretary's table and as the sacrament table when the sacrament was offered.

Fall Conference of 1901

The log church was filled with happy anticipation as the preparations for the 1901 fall conference of the South Texas District of the Southwestern States Mission were being made. The conference was for the whole district and was held Saturday and Sunday, November 23 and 24 within its new walls and upon its grounds, the very first big occasion! Elder Brooks, confined to the Williamson Settlement with his broken ankle, was making the conference arrangements.

On Friday afternoon the Saints from Spurger, Tyler County, arrived by covered wagons filled with bedding, food, and happy people coming to receive a spiritual feast within the new building with food and friendly visiting and fellowship upon its grounds. Spring conference had been held in Spurger and they did not want to miss this one. Delia Baker Stephenson remembers: "I wore a new red serge dress." A big dinner-on-the-ground followed the conference session.

Organization of the First Sunday School and the First Church

Sunday, June 8, 1902, mission leaders organized the first Sunday School in the Settlement. They named it the Moroni Sunday School and Paren Preston Williamson was the Superintendent. Joshua Treme served as the Assistant Superintendent with Zillie Ann Williamson as secretary. "In October 1904, the [Sunday School] was discontinued for six years because several families moved away and there was no one to carry on."

They held the Spring Conference of the South Texas District of the Central States Mission Tuesday and Wednesday, May 10-11, 1910 in the Williamson Settlement. The log church was again the spot for an enjoyable time, and the Spirit of the Lord was most abundant. Saturday, May 14, 1910, they reorganized the Sunday School with Paren Williamson as the Superintendent.

The Log Church became the school site for one session, the Fall in 1906 until early Spring of 1907. The pupils came from throughout the community and included Edna, Maggie, Abb, Ada and Bob Williamson; Delia, Millie and John Baker; and members of the Bellard family. They held a second session of school in the Log Church in 1911-1912 with the Bellard family and William's grandchildren as the majority of the students.

Thursday, 29 January 1914, the log church was again filled with joyful anticipation! Its physical condition was fast deteriorating, but spirits were high! On this morning they organized the Williamson Branch with Calvin Williamson as President. Jacob S. Gallier and Jasper Williamson were the Counselors, and Zillie Williamson Treme was the Branch clerk and chorister. "It was called the Williamson Branch, no doubt, after the member of that Community, William Williamson." "Elders Monday and Vincent writing from Evadale, Texas say: "The work of the Lord in this part of the country is in a flourishing condition."

For almost four years they had held the second Sunday School regularly. There would often be only a few who would attend but they were regular and faithful. Grandma Williamson was greatly missed! How well the building must have remembered her sweet, spiritual voice when in 1910 she had pled with the members to resolve and to work that the Sunday School would never again be discontinued.

Neither the Sunday School (1910) nor the Branch (1914) has ever been discontinued. Relief Society was added in 1916 with Mutual and Primary following. In October 1953, the Williamson branch became the Williamson Ward in the Houston Stake (No. 209). Later, on 3 September 1961, it was part of the new Beaumont Stake (No. 333) and in 1977, the Ward was divided into Williamson Ward I and Williamson Ward II.

In 1914, President Seleck had said: "The saints here show a great interest in the work and we feel that this branch will make one of the best in the state." His prophecy has truly been fulfilled.

Pioneer Day Celebrations

In a letter to President Calvin Williamson & Counselor dated February 12, 1914, Central States Mission President S. O. Bennion wrote: "I am sure you will do a lot of good; that you will be able to gather and make friends for the church, for the cause of our Father in Heaven and His son, the Savior of the world . . . We hope that you will enjoy your work and that you will never leave anything undone towards establishing the work of the Lord in your branch."

Calvin and the small number of members set out to do as they had been instructed. They organized the most successful series of events in the history of the Williamson Settlement, the celebration of Mormon Pioneer Day. They invited the public, gave away pit-roasted beef and all the trimmings, provided rodeo events, music and speeches. They saw it all as a missionary tool.

The Settlement's first Pioneer Day celebration was in 1914. They held it on the grounds and within the crumbling walls of the log church. The program consisted of 24 numbers and included solos by Jasper, Calvin, Abb and Frank Williamson; duets and trios by many elders there; a recitation by Paren Williamson; talks by Jacob Gallier and Calvin and Bob Williamson; and an explanation of "Why the Mormons Celebrate July 24th" by Elder Young who presided and conducted the event. There was fiddling by John Baker and Ellis Hayes with dancing by Elder Smith. This was but a small beginning that soon grew into participation by thousands.

The Beaumont Enterprise, July 25, 1928 recorded the 24th of July activities for that year. The headline read "4000 Partake of Barbecue as Williamson Settlement Holds Mormon Celebration 2200 Pounds of

Meat Served And Dance and Rodeo Given As Entrance Into Utah Is Commemorated."

Approximately 4000 persons yesterday ate 2200 pounds of barbecue given away by the Mormons of the Williamson settlement in Orange county in connection with their annual celebration of the entrance of the Mormons into Salt Lake Valley in 1847. Visitors came from the entire surrounding country, some arriving from Sour Lake, Liberty, Houston, Jasper, Orange, Beaumont and Kirbyville. But there was barbecue for all. Not only the barbecue was given to the visitors, but they were admitted to a big rodeo where there was steer riding, bronc busting, and horse racing.

They did not hold the Celebrations on such a large scale after the year 1929. This was due to the illness of Branch President, Calvin Williamson, and because of the great expense and responsibility. However, those early celebrations did much to acquaint the public with the Williamson Settlement and the Mormon religion. They decreased prejudices against members of the church, cemented the Williamson Settlement's place in history and established William Williamson as the patriarch of his family and of the church in this area.

WILLIAMSON RELIGIOUS HISTORY

(Article was given to Delmer Oldbury by Ima Wright with the understanding that Epsie Wright had written it.)

William Williamson, known to everyone as Uncle Billy lived a Christian life, but until five months before his death was not a member of any church. He really lived the golden rule in his daily life and it was a known fact that he would give his last dollar to anyone he thought needed it more than himself. Several instances have been recorded that he took the few dollars they had saved and give to strangers and well as

neighbors. He was hospitable, kind and generous to a fault and an undoubtedly had a wonderful philosophy of life. Most of the people in the community were hard shell Baptist.

However Uncle Billy's belief and ideas about religion were so different from theirs that they looked on him as almost an atheist. He didn't believe in just Heaven and Hell, and he also thought there should be degrees of Glory or a blessing for each person according to his deeds. So we can understand why he accepted the gospel so readily when he first heard the Elders preach.

Even though most of the people were prejudicial to the Mormon religion, it was said of Uncle Billy when he was baptized, that William Williamson had excepted a belief and was baptized in a church. Uncle Billy had for a companion a wife equally as religious as himself. Grandma Williamson was raised a Catholic however she joined the Baptist Church after living in Texas a number of years. She prayed regularly three times a day and undoubtedly was an influence for good to her children through their whole lives. She taught them to read and study the bible which made it easy for them to understand and accept the gospel.

Elder Reed and Brooks came to the "Free Will Baptist Church" near Evadale in January 1900. They were having a big revival and as was the custom, Uncle Billy and his family attended. The Elder remarked that day that they intended to visit every home in the county. Everyone seemed more curious than anything else of the Elders first meeting. But later when they did call at each home they did not find welcome at every door. Some refused them to enter, others expected them as strangers and not ministers and others were very friendly and hospitable to them.

The name of the families that received the Elders at first and later excepted the gospel were: Cole's, Treme's, Gallier's, and Williamson's. The Elders came to Wiess Bluff and followed a trail made to Grandpa

Williamson's home on their first visit, they stayed about a week. They visited in the people's homes and explained the principles of the gospel that they felt the people could understand. Also it has been recalled that on the Elders' first visit that they did not mention the teaching of the church. Most everyone used tobacco in one form or another. Some of the children and many of the women smoked pipes and so not to antagonize the people and teach them slowly, they were taught just a few principles of the gospel at first. In one discussion with Uncle Billy's family, they made the remark "If you can find one thing by the Bible that we teach isn't true, we will leave the country. If we are not telling the truth, we would be better off at home". So they left promising to visit them again in the Spring.

The Williamson family accepted the challenge and their building was erected in 1915. At this time a new Dept. was organized in the branch that commands a place in this religion history. The Elders organized the work and along with the church it was really a task to keep going on at first. Zillie Treme was the first Relief Society President and Bell Williamson and Sadie Williamson as counselors. Mahalia Williamson & Maggie Williamson were visiting teachers. Offie Isgitt from Kelsey, Texas was the first secretary. She was a great help in interesting and teaching in Relief Society work at the early meetings they did very little other than read the scriptures and piece quilts. The communication was bad and the world war was going on, but today this dept. is the most active in the church. There could be written a story about these many good deeds. The needy families of this church and community owe much to their thoughtfulness.

Dating back the Williamson branch has celebrated Pioneer Day, July 24 of the entry of Brigham Young into Salt Lake City. The first celebration was just a program, mostly talks, songs and recitation but they later added a basket dinner and invited more & more people. Then they began from year to year to add more attractions. First a free barbecue for their friends to enjoy, then a small rodeo and ball games with dancing until the year 1926 when we have an event of historical interest to recording

this religious history. The church won much publicity and it was one event of the year the Williamson's family looked forward to.

The Houston & Beaumont papers gave much space to this event. "Southeast Texas makes merry with little Mormon colony in annual big celebration and hundreds flock to Williamson Settlement to dance and eat barbecue with followers of Joseph Smith" were a few of many captions on front pages of their papers. In 1928 the Beaumont Enterprise informed the world on its front page that 7000 visitors attended the Mormon Celebration. They sent out photographers - reporters who spent the day and the papers were full of large pictures of the things of interest. The morning was taken up with a program and religious talks by the Elders. Free barbecue and served 2500 lbs. of it at noon. Then the rodeo and horse racing began at two o'clock. There were prizes given to the contestants.

Many members took part in the rodeo, but it was open to the public. An open air platform was built near the church building and dancing was held the night and the afternoon of the celebration. Due to the illness of Calvin Williamson and because of great expense and responsibility, the celebrations were not held on such a big scale after 1929. But it did much to acquaint the public with the Mormon religion and put Williamson Settlement on the map. Moodge Tremé was elected president of the branch on Oct. 28, 1928 and he held it office until March 1935 when the present President was set apart B. V. Stephenson now holds that office with Robert Williamson & Frank Williamson as counselors. (End of Epsie Wright's article.)

William and Joissine Williamson

Source unknown

William was born in or around New Orleans, on August 15, 1829. His family had recently come from New York, where his older brother George had been born in 1827. William's father died of yellow fever in

February 1830, and William's mother passed away in 1843, while William was a teenager. William was Scot-Irish, with sandy, reddish colored hair and gray eyes. There is little known of William's parentage and ancestry, but there have been stories remembered by old-timers and enough research done to come to some conclusion about his past. (During the Yellow Fever epidemic, many of the afflicted were sent to large cities, where they were cared for while they waited to either return to good health or die). Therefore, William's father may not have died at home with his family, because he was sent to New Orleans for his health. His mother, Anna (Thayer) Williamson, remarried after the death of William's father. (Tradition says to a Mr. Reed). After their mother's death, George and William left home to seek lives and fortunes for themselves.

George and William told stories of spending time with an Uncle Henry Williamson, who worked on the Mississippi River. They finally found work as cow hands on a ranch outside of Welsh, Louisiana. The ranch was huge, calving and /or branding around one thousand head of cattle each year. The cowhands who worked the ranch, also helped with the cattle drives, bringing cattle in from the west to hold for market in New Orleans. Adam's Ranch in East Texas was a gathering place for cattle and men to drive the herds east. George and William were familiar with the Adams Ranch and followed the herds along the trail from there to Welsh. The cattle and the cattle drives became William and George's life. It was said that they lived in the saddle. Evidently, William's time on his horse bowed his legs to fit his lifestyle. He sometimes attended dances, and at one dance the comment was made that William was so bowlegged that a barrel could be rolled through his legs without touching either of them.

While William was working cattle on the Louisiana ranch, his future wife was growing up on a plantation (all farm industry that used slaves). The word was not connotative of the luxurious, sumptuous living that is often now associated with it. Therefore, the wealth or poverty of the Desmaret plantation is not a factor here. Joachine (pronounced Wah-

seen) Desmaret was born on March 26, 1838, and was one of six girls and four boys belonging to Toussaint Desmaret and Celeste (Guillory). Her ancestors were French, coming four generations before her, from France, by way of Canada and following the Mississippi River south to Louisiana. There were, of course, tribes of Native Americans who inhabited this area, and Joissine told of exchanges with them when she was a girl. The Native Americans traded hand-woven baskets or begged for food. One anecdote tells of a visit Joissine and her sister made to the nearby Indian village. Something was wrong, but the girls didn't know what it was. The village women were hiding all the weapons in the village and seemed much distressed. The women communicated with the girls that the men from the village had been given some liquor and they were beginning to get drunk. The men could become very mean and dangerous when under the influence of alcohol, and so the girls were urged to leave as quickly as possible. Joissine and her sister were very frightened and ran home as fast as they could.

Joissine described a dress that she wanted her mother to make for her. Evidently, her mother responded by saying that, "If you want that dress, you would need to make it yourself". Joissine did. And the story goes, she found she loved to sew. She was still a young teenager when she made a suit of clothes for her brother. He wore this suit to a wedding party. While at the party, Joissine noticed that the placket of his pants was sewn on the wrong side. She could scarcely wait to get home so she could take the pants apart and correctly sew them. She later sewed for her own family, as well as for neighbors. When a child would cut his or her finger, Joissine would make a stall for them. To Joissine, a stall was a triangular piece of cloth sewn into a cone shape with ties on the base. The stall would fit over the injured finger and be held secure with the ties fastened around the hand.

Joissine was a very pretty girl and a friend said that she could have had any beau she wanted, without even dressing up. But until she was seventeen, Joissine never found a man she wanted to marry. Her sister, Celestine married a man named Dave Foreman, who was the foreman of

a large cattle ranch, just outside of Welsh, Louisiana. Joissine visited her and during a visit, she met and fell in love with William Williamson, a twenty-four old cow hand. They married on December 12, 1854 and made their first home in Louisiana close to the ranch where William worked. Their first bed was made from Spanish moss that Joissine gathered from trees while canoeing through the swamps. Their most valued wedding gift was a big cast iron pot with legs four to five inches high, allowing for a fire to be built underneath it.

William and Joissine's first child was born October 14, 1855. This first little girl, Emelia (also known as Millie), was the only child of the first four to live beyond the age of two. George, born and died 1857; William, born 1859 and died 1862; and Mary Jane, born and died 1861, were believed to have died because of the bad swamp vapors in the area where the Williamsons lived.

In 1862, William joined the Confederate Soldiers of America. He was in the 4th Cavalry Unit from Louisiana. During most of the war, he was stationed close to home, and could visit his family. (Both the 4th and 5th Cavalry Units existed to protect the home front). William was involved in ... the retaking of Baton Rouge from the Union Troops. During this conflict, there was an 80% casualty count in the 4th Unit. William was not hurt at all. He then saw action in the Red River Campaign. His unit surrendered to Union forces in June 1865, and in August he rode home on the same horse he had left on three years before.

Back in Louisiana, William returned to the cowboy business, and William and Joissine thought about moving to Texas, where George had moved prior to the Civil War. George was working at Adam's Ranch and William joined him there. During the war years, William and Joissine had two more children, Jasper, born 1862 and Melissa Ann, born 1864. Wanting a new start after the war, and from fear that their newest babies would fall victim to the swamp vapors, Joissine joined William in Texas on Adam's Ranch.

After running the cattle on Adam's Ranch for a season, William and Joissine decided to put down roots and stay. In 1867, they moved to the old Williamson Homestead. They bought the rights to it from a man named Weskit. The first person known to camp on the land was Mark Cole but William Williamson was the first to homestead it. He had it surveyed and deeds made, and set about making it into settled land from wilderness. Although there were settlers throughout the area, East Texas was still untamed. There were long needle pine, ash, cypress, magnolia and hickory trees. Animals native to the area included: bear, deer, raccoon, opossum, fox, turkey, partridge, and wild boar.

Times were hard for everyone after the Civil War, for there was a recession and cattle prices were down to \$2.00 a head. These were especially hard times for William and Joissine, new settlers in rough land. They grew their own food and made their own tools, clothes and shoes. George and William were very good at making plows, spinning wheels and other implements. They had to chop down most of their trees with solid toothed saws that would pinch and catch on the wood. The cattle wandered for the most part and were rounded up, driven to market, and sold by the brand on the cow. Hogs could not be raised very well because of the bear. There wasn't as much food in the woods as there was near the watering holes, where the hogs would stay, and the bear would come there to catch the hogs. There wasn't a lot of food in the woods for people either, and some foods that are raised in the area today were not known in the early days of the Williamson homestead. Corn was used exclusively to feed the stock, not eaten as wheat sweet corn now. Flour was extremely high in price, costing about \$12.00 a pound, so out of necessity, the folks would grind their meal from corn. Joissine washed clothes in the creek. These pioneers made their own candles to light their homes, their own lye soap to wash clothes and bodies; they grew their own cotton, picked out the seeds, carded it, spun it, wove it and made clothes from it. There were no dentists and very few doctors in the area. Joissine pulled her own teeth with a pull-a-kin, as they decayed. She knew how to care for the sick, and not only doctored her own family, but often tended to neighbors who were ill. As time passed,

things became a bit easier and the Williamson's had the food they needed, along with the other necessities of life. Both William and Joissine had a strong sense of humor and many of the hardships which came to them were born more easily because they were able to see the funny side of a situation.

Although life was hard for many years, Joissine made things as nice as possible. The Williamson home had two sections: there were four rooms called the living quarters. A long porch in front joined the two buildings. Their home had Four-o'clocks in the front and along the fences. These flowers were William's favorite and Joissine brought the seeds from Louisiana to plant for him. She also brought acorns for live Oaks, and the Settlement has many large, old oaks that were grown from the acorns of Joissine's trees.

William and Joissine were blessed with nine more children after they moved to Texas, and although two more died as children (Louisiana, the tenth was born in 1872 and died at age 6. Absalom, the twelfth was born 1879 and died in 1890, at age 11), no more died as infants. Joissine was comforted somewhat through the deaths of her children because of her strong religious background. She and all of her people were Catholics, but when she moved to Texas, there was no Catholic parish near, so she attended the Baptist church. Most of her children were christened or baptized into one of the two faiths. William, although deeply religious, waited until six months before his death to join a church. He lived a Christian life, always putting others before himself, being very honest, and giving anything and sometimes all he had to help others. Another anecdote is told about William's trusting generosity:

William had been saving his hard earned pennies for a long time in order to buy his family some much needed necessities. A man came through the country and wanted to go to Beaumont. William gave the man all of his money, which was \$5.00, for a simple promise that if he ever came back that way, the man would repay him.

Abel, born in 1871, was the ninth child of William and Joissine. He died in 1896, in a logging/railroad accident when he was twenty-five, having never joined any religion. This bothered Joissine and seemed to haunt her for a long time. She looked for a religion that would offer something for those who died without joining a church. In 1900, a pair of Mormon Missionaries traveling through the country stayed the night at the Williamson's because of rain swollen creeks. The overnight stay lasted for several weeks and by the time it was over, the Williamson's were converted to the religion. William and Joissine, having had all their questions answered, were baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) in 1900. William and Joissine's children joined the church and although William passed away in the fall of 1900, his family kept the homestead and were strong in the Mormon faith. Meetings were held at the Williamson homestead whenever the Mormon Elders would come through. It didn't take long for the name of William Williamson to become associated with anything that had to do with the Mormon faith. Anytime anyone would ask about the Mormons, or ask about new religions, he or she would be sent to the Williamson homestead. Many of the other people who had originally settled in the area, left for different reasons. The Williamson family and the Mormons, remained in this area. A small log church house was built and everyone in the surrounding area knew that the Mormons had a strong foothold in the settlement where William Williamson had lived. The settlement that was mostly Mormon began to be called the Williamson Settlement.

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