

Sent by Miss. Yourse  
O.B.H.S.

SOUTHEASTERN MASSACHUSETTS HUMPHREY FAMILIES 1629

19, 1833, daughter of Sylvanus and Joanna, married Capt. George H. Clark, of Somerset, and had children: Frederic Lovell, born Sept. 10, 1835, died March 17, 1867; Lucy Frances, born Sept. 28, 1863, married Frederick A. Brownell; Maria Burnett, born May 25, 1866, married Elliot H. Wefel.

(VII) Lucy Anna Lovell, daughter of Sylvanus and Joanna, born May 5, 1841, married Capt. George A. Covell, of New Bedford, on Dec. 23, 1861, and had children: Abby Almy, born Nov. 23, 1862; William Pitman, born June 11, 1865; and Frances Gertrude, born Aug. 18, 1867.

SAVERY. (I) Thomas Savery and wife were living at Plymouth in 1643. They were the first of the name in the New World, and are the ancestors of the majority of those bearing the name in New England.

(II) Samuel Savery, son of Thomas, was born June 4, 1651. His wife's name is unknown.

(III) Thomas Savery, son of Samuel, born in 1681 (O. S.), married in 1705 Esther Saunders, or Saunderson. He died about 1731.

(IV) Samuel Savery, son of Thomas, born in 1718, was one of the leading men of Wareham, served as selectman, and was chairman of the most important town committees; member of the committee of Correspondence and Safety in the Revolutionary war, and had a commission as captain in the Continental army. He married Elizabeth Bumpus, who died in 1787, aged sixty-nine years. He died in 1812, aged ninety-three years.

(V) Samuel Savery, Jr., son of Capt. Samuel, was born Feb. 14, 1747. He was sergeant of a detachment of troops guarding Wareham harbor June 24, 1814. He died Nov. 28, 1836, aged nearly ninety years. On Dec. 13, 1770, he married Ruth Gibbs, who died in 1817, aged sixty-five years.

(VI) Lucy Savery, daughter of Samuel, Jr., born in Wareham July 29, 1772, married Sylvanus Lovell, of Middleboro, in 1791. Their children were: Patience, Betsy, Thomas and Sylvanus, Jr.

(VII) Sylvanus Lovell, Jr., son of Sylvanus and Lucy, married Joanna Briggs, of Middleboro, and had children: Sylvanus Henry, Joanna Frances and Lucy Anna, the latter marrying Capt. George Albert Covell.

a substantial man of that community, a successful dealer in hardware, and whose son and successor in that line of business is the present Albert Humphrey, one of the active and leading business men of the town, is one of long and honorable standing in the ancient town of Weymouth, Mass., the Weymouth family being a branch of the earlier Dorchester family, the progenitor of which was Jonas Humphrey. It is the purpose of this article to deal with the Wrentham family alluded to, the Humphrey lineage of which is set forth in the following, beginning with the first American ancestor, and continuing in chronological order to the present.

(1) Jonas Humphrey, a native of Wendover, County of Bucks, England, a glovemaking by trade, came to New England with his family in 1637, and settled in Dorchester, where he seems to have been a man of standing and respectability, and he united with the church there in 1639. The Christian name of his first wife was Frances. He married later Jane Clapp, widow of George Weeks. Mr. Humphrey died March 19, 1662, in Dorchester. His children, all born to Frances, were: James and Jonas, both born in England; Elizabeth; Susanna, and Sarah.

(II) Jonas Humphrey (2), born about 1620 in Wendover, England, removed with his father in 1637 to Dorchester, New England, and for a time resided there, but later settled in Weymouth, Mass., perhaps not permanently, about 1653. He resided in the northern part of the town, and the old homestead was kept in the family name for upward of two centuries. Mr. Humphrey was a man of capacity and influence, one of the leaders of the town. He was for many years a selectman, and a part of the time was chairman of the board. He was a deacon in the church. The Christian name of his wife was Martha. Mr. Humphrey died Feb. 11, 1698-99, aged seventy-nine years. His children were: Samuel, Nathaniel, Jonas, John, Sarah and James.

(III) Jonas Humphrey (3), son of Jonas (2), born Feb. 24, 1655, in Weymouth, Mass., married Mary, daughter of Richard and Elizabeth Phillips, of Weymouth, and they resided in that town. He served in the Indian campaign of 1675, against King Philip, being a member of Captain Johnson's company. He was industrious and provident, and left quite an estate. He died Oct. 30, 1689. His children were Jonas, James and Mary.

(IV) Jonas Humphrey (4), son of Jonas (3), was born Sept. 3, 1684, in Weymouth, Mass. His first wife, Martha, died in 1712. He

HUMPHREY (Wareham family). The family of this name at Wareham, the head of which is the venerable Galen Humphrey, long



married (second) in 1716 Mary Neal, of Braintree, Mass. Mr. Humphrey lived and died in Weymouth, his death occurring in 1761; his widow passed away about five years later. One son, John, was born to the first wife, and the following named children to the second: Mary, Martha, Samuel, Hannah, Samuel (2) and James.

(V) Samuel Humphrey, son of Jonas and Mary (Neal) Humphrey, born June 7, 1728, in Weymouth, Mass., married (first) Nov. 7, 1751, Sarah, born Aug. 31, 1727, daughter of Samuel and Mary (Phillips) Badlam. She is reported to have been a talented and well-educated young woman. She died in 1772, when about forty-five years of age, and Mr. Humphrey married (second) April 7, 1774, Sarah, widow of Ebenezer Bicknell, Jr., and daughter of John and Deborah (Whitmarsh) Tirrell. She was born in Weymouth Aug. 21, 1730. Mr. Humphrey was a housewright and resided upon the "homestead" in Old Spain, on what is now North street, nearly opposite the entrance to Neck street. Just prior to the American Revolution he purchased of the heirs the old estate of the Dyers, which had been in that family for a hundred and forty years, on the old Plymouth road, at its junction with the road leading to Old Spain. This property remained in the Humphrey family for three generations. Mr. Humphrey possessed considerable mechanical ingenuity, which was exhibited in the pursuit of his calling in the manufacture of very nice desks, tables, chairs and baskets—very fine specimens of workmanship for the time. He died Nov. 10, 1800, aged seventy-two years, leaving an estate appraised at approximately \$5,000. His wife, Sarah (2), died Sept. 17, 1811, aged eighty-one. His children, all born in Weymouth, were: Sarah, born Sept. 1, 1752, who died in January, 1753; James, born Dec. 5, 1754; Samuel, born April 22, 1758, who died April 28, 1759; Samuel (2), born Sept. 30, 1761; Joseph, born Sept. 27, 1763, who died in December of that same year; and Sarah, born Nov. 4, 1765, who married Joseph Cain.

(VI) James Humphrey, son of Samuel and Sarah (Badlam) Humphrey, born Dec. 5, 1751, in Weymouth, Mass., married Nov. 6, 1777, Deborah, born July 15, 1753, in Weymouth, daughter of Abel and Deborah (Loud) Tirrell. Mr. Humphrey was a man of much literary taste in his early years and it was the intention of his parents to give him a college education, so he was prepared for Harvard, but circumstances and conditions later prevented this. Soon after his marriage Mr. Humphrey

began teaching a public school for six months in the year. This he continued to do for twenty-four consecutive years, and for two years at intervals afterward. He had the reputation of being a competent teacher in the English, Latin and Greek languages, and was particularly successful in teaching mathematics. He frequently taught private schools, and drew large classes from out of town points, in his neighborhood. For much of the time from 1781 to 1805 he served as selectman, assessor and overseer of the poor of the town of Weymouth. He devoted much of the last thirty years of his life to public business, of which period for some twenty years he was acting justice of the peace; for several years he was also a notary public. He died March 12, 1819, in his sixty-fifth year. His wife survived him nearly twenty-four years, dying Dec. 30, 1842, in the ninetyeth year of her age. Their children were: Asa, born Sept. 25, 1778; Ebenezer, Aug. 27, 1781; Lemuel, May 11, 1784; Deborah, March 25, 1787 (married Jan. 6, 1808, Abner Wilder, a native of Hingham); Lucy, Dec. 31, 1789 (married Elisha Cushing, a native of Hingham); Levi, Nov. 13, 1792; Susan, Jan. 15, 1796 (died Nov. 5, 1825, unmarried); Lydia, Aug. 16, 1798 (married Capt. Herve Cushing, a native of Weymouth).

(VII) Asa Humphrey, son of James and Deborah (Tirrell) Humphrey, born Sept. 25, 1778, in Weymouth, Mass., married March 30, 1809, Mary, daughter of John and Martha (Norris) Maxim, who was a native of Carver, Mass. Mr. Humphrey received a good education, and taught school for three terms. He edited and published a book on English prosody (1849) and also one on punctuation. He learned the shoemaker's trade and located in South Carver, Mass., where he resided until his death, which occurred Jan. 24, 1861. His wife survived and died Dec. 21, 1872. Their children, all born in Carver, were: Harriet, born May 14, 1810, married Emory Champney of Wendell, Mass.; Deborah, born May 16, 1812, married Nelson Stone, of Wayland, Mass.; Eliza, born Sept. 3, 1814, married Daniel Hicks Wetherell, of Taunton, Mass.; Clifford, born Oct. 21, 1816, married Summer Atwood of South Carver, Mass.; Fenton, born Feb. 1, 1819, married Mary Griffith; Charlotte, born May 22, 1820, married Elbridge G. Baker; Galen was born Sept. 2, 1823; Lucy, born April 10, 1825, married Ezra Blackwell, of Sandwich, Massachusetts.

(VIII) GALEN HUMPHREY, son of Asa and Mary (Maxim) Humphrey, born Sept. 2, 1822, in Carver, Mass., attended the public school

of his native town, and fitted himself for a position as teacher in the public schools, having taught two years in Middleboro, Plymouth county, and two years in the town of Carver before he reached his majority. At the age of twenty he removed to Hopkinton, Mass., where he attended Grove Seminary. In 1845 he went to East Wareham, where for five consecutive terms he taught school. In 1850 he started for California, the Eldorado of the West, taking the pioneer route. He remained in that vicinity until the spring of 1852, engaged in prospecting and mining, but not meeting with the wished-for success in his search for gold he then returned to his native State. From that time on until 1863 he was engaged in farming in East Wareham, also in teaching, having taught school eighteen winters and one summer session. Subsequently he carried on a good grocery business for fifteen years, but disposing of his store came to Wareham, and from 1880 to 1883 was engaged as a merchant, the business since then being carried on by his son and successor. Mr. Humphrey early became interested in cranberry culture, and was among the pioneer growers in his section, and in this line of work he is still engaged. He has also surveyed and laid out a number of cranberry bogs in Wareham and vicinity. Though advanced in years he is still in possession of all his faculties and reads easily without the aid of glasses. He is frequently called upon to settle estates, and has done a great deal of probate work. He has always been interested in the development of his section, and he has done a great deal to assist in this development. In 1859 he published a book, designed for the farmer and the mechanic, giving tables for surveying wood and lumber, and showing the contents of nearly five thousand measurements, and this handy book is still in use.

On Jan. 19, 1853, Mr. Humphrey married Nancy Nichols Besse, who was born Nov. 24, 1831, daughter of Seth and Sarah (Briggs) Besse. Mrs. Humphrey is active in religious and temperance work, and has long been a member of the W. C. T. U. To this union were born children as follows: (1) Sophia Besse, born Nov. 23, 1853, married May 26, 1887, Almon H. Stone, of Phillipston, Mass., and has one child, Nelson, born Sept. 9, 1891. (2) Albert, born Dec. 3, 1855, in Wareham, was educated in the public and high schools of Wareham, where he graduated, and he also had private lessons. He then engaged in business with his father, succeeding the latter on his retirement. In January, 1892, he married Emma G. Pettigrew, of Phillipston, and they

have had children: Mary Evers, born in February, 1893, who died in October, 1907; Lawrence Edmund, Robert Clinton, and George Albert. (3) Clinton, born April 30, 1858, was educated in the public and high schools of Wareham, and later entered a business college, where he took a business course in penmanship, after which he began the study of civil engineering and surveying, a profession which on account of ill health he followed in California; he died May 1, 1889, in Wareham. He was a member of the Methodist Church. (4) Horace Mann, born Jan. 25, 1867, married Emma Gertrude Gallienne, and has one child, Louise Besse.

Politically Mr. Humphrey is a decided Republican, and faithfully adheres to the principles of that party. He is also a staunch temperance advocate. He has been a member of the school committee for fifteen years, a justice of the peace for the same period, and has served as selectman, assessor and overseer of the poor, besides being roadmaster and holding other minor offices. He and his estimable wife are members of the Methodist Church.

**BESSE.** The Besse family, to which Mrs. Galen Humphrey belongs, is an ancient Cape Cod family, of some two hundred and seventy-five years' standing in Massachusetts.

(I) Anthony Besse, aged forty-six, came in the "James" in 1635. He was for a time at Lynn and was among the first from that point who settled in Sandwich. He preached, it is said, to the Indians. In his will of Feb. 10, 1656, he mentions his wife, Jane, and children Nehemiah, David, Anne, Mary and Elizabeth. The widow Jane remarried, marrying (second) George Barlow. Her will bears date of Aug. 6, 1693, and in it she mentions daughters Anne Hallett, Elizabeth Bodfish and Rebecca Hunter, and sons Nehemiah Besse and John Barlow.

(II) Nehemiah Besse, son of Anthony, married Mary, and their children were: Mary, born in November, 1680, who married Dec. 3, 1700, Benjamin Curtis, of Plymouth; Nehemiah, born July 3, 1682; Hannah, born in 1684-85, who married Oct. 5, 1708, Thomas Jones; Robert, born April 30, 1690, who married May 9, 1712, Ruth Pray, of Bridgewater; Joshua, born Feb. 14, 1692-93; David, born Dec. 23, 1693; Benjamin, born Sept. 20, 1696, and Ebenezer, born April 30, 1699.

(III) David Besse, son of Nehemiah, born Dec. 23, 1693, married July 18, 1717, Mary Pray, of Bridgewater. This David Besse, it is assumed, is the David of Plymouth who had

Paul Revere Lodge, A. F. & A. M., Brockton, of which he was worshipful master. He was at the time of his death one of the oldest living members of the lodge, and he was always anxious to promote its work. In his early life he was a Baptist, but later he attended Porter Congregational Church, Brockton. In February, 1903, Mr. Trow was mustered in for the second time as a member of Fletcher Webster Post, No. 13, G. A. R., a special meeting being held at his bedside for that purpose. He had previously been a member of that post for many years, but had allowed his membership to lapse, and fearing that his end was near his wish to become again a comrade of the post was thus gratified.

In August, 1903, on the celebration of his eightieth birthday, he greeted over one hundred friends and acquaintances, among whom were many prominent Masons and former comrades of the war, the occasion being made notable by presentation and letters. He died at his home, No. 69 Wyman street, in the eighty-second year of his age, July 3, 1905. He enjoyed to the utmost the respect and esteem of the community in which the greater part of his life had been spent.

On March 8, 1847, Mr. Trow was united in marriage with Olive Hayward Marshall, of Marshall's Corner, North Bridgewater, Mass., daughter of Hayward and Almira (Wild) Marshall, and their children were: (1) Frederick Stickney, born April 25, 1849, died Dec. 15, 1849. (2) Lizzie Florence was born May 3, 1856. (3) Anna Marshall, born April 17, 1858, married Henry T. Cushman, of Raynham, Mass., and died aged twenty-four years, the mother of one son, Marshall Laurence Cushman, born Jan. 17, 1883, who was graduated from the University of Michigan, at Ann Arbor, in 1907, after which he furthered his medical and surgical studies in Europe, making a specialty of the study of autolaryngology, and is now settled at Lansing, Mich., as a specialist in diseases of the ear, nose, throat and eye. (4) Eugenia Torrey, born May 25, 1861, died Aug. 5, 1862.

In March, 1903, Mr. and Mrs. Trow celebrated the fifty-sixth anniversary of their marriage. The wife and daughter, Miss Lizzie, survive the husband and father. For some years the daughter has been a teacher in the Brockton schools.

**HUMPHREY.** The Humphrey family here considered is a branch of the Rhode Island-Vermont family of the name, represented in the town of Rochester, Plymouth Co., Mass.,

by George W. Humphrey, farmer and dairyman, a man of solidity and useful citizenship. The genealogy and family history of this branch of the New England Humphreys follow in chronological order from the immigrant settler.

(I) Jonas Humphrey, a native of the town of Wendover, in the County of Bucks, England, seems to have been a man of character and repute in his native land, holding the office of constable, no mean position of that day. Tradition has him a glovemaker by trade, in England, but that after coming to New England he turned his attention to tanning. He with his family came to New England in 1637, landing Sept. 9th of that year at Dorchester, where they lodged the first night in a house which with the land about it he purchased the day following and which continued in the possession of the family eight generations, if not longer, and where the various members carried on the same branch of business, the old tanyard continuing well into the nineteenth century. He united with the church in Dorchester in 1639. He was granted land in 1637 and in 1646 was a proprietor in the great lots. The Christian name of his first wife was Frances, but as to whether she was living at the time of his emigration seems to be unknown. He married (second) Jane Clapp, widow of George Weeks, she being born in Salcombe Regis, England; both she and Jonas died at Dorchester, he, in 1662, and she, in 1668. His children, all born to the first marriage, were: James, Jonas, Elizabeth, Susanna and Sarah.

(II) Deacon Jonas Humphrey, born in Wendover, England, about 1620, came with his father to New England in 1637 and settled at Dorchester; and after a few years removed to Weymouth, perhaps not permanently, settling there until about 1653. He resided in that part of Weymouth called "Old Spain" and the old homestead on Neck street remained in the family for nearly two centuries. He was a man of great capacity and influence and one of the leaders of the town. He served many years as selectman, a part of the time as chairman of the board. He was deacon of the church for a long time previous to his decease, on Feb. 11, 1698-99, at the age of seventy-nine years. He was made a freeman in 1653. The Christian name of his wife was Martha. His children, the eldest two born in Dorchester and the others in Weymouth, were: Samuel, born in 1649; Nathaniel, born in 1652; Jonas, born Feb. 24, 1655; John, born

*\* I think this is James Humphrey  
who signed Sarah Reed's guardianship  
papers in 1706*

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Aug. 31, 1658; Sarah, born May 16, 1661; and James, born Sept. 10, 1665. \*

(III) Samuel Humphrey, born in 1649, in Dorchester, Mass., removed with his father when a child to Weymouth. He was made a freeman in 1678 and was a man of standing and respectability, serving the town as selectman before his removal to that part of Swansea which became Barrington, R. I., whither he took his family about 1698. He married at Weymouth Mary, daughter of James and Ann (Hatch) Torrey, of Scituate. Mr. Humphrey was one of the petitioners of Swansea in 1711 or 1712 for greater convenience in church and public business matters and some years later, in 1717, the town of Barrington was ordered erected. He became clerk and treasurer of Barrington in 1719. In 1717 he was chosen deacon of the Congregational Church, of which his son Josiah was elected deacon in 1735. The children of Samuel and Mary were all born in Weymouth, as follows: Sarah, Oct. 27, 1679; Samuel, Dec. 23, 1681; John, Feb. 19, 1683-84; Josiah, Dec. 9, 1686; James, April 21, 1689; and Mary, Jan. 30, 1693.

(IV) Josiah Humphrey, born in Weymouth, Mass., Dec. 9, 1686, married Hannah and their children of Barrington town record, according to Arnold, were: Josiah, born Oct. 13, 1717; Samuel, born Dec. 24, 1719; Hannah, born Jan. 2, 1721-22; Nathaniel, born Nov. 24, 1724 (died June 15, 1726); Mary, born July 7, 1729; Sarah, born July 11, 1731; Nathaniel (2), born Nov. 26, 1735; and Ruth, born March 1, 1737-38.

(V) Samuel Humphrey (2), born Dec. 24, 1719, married Feb. 27, 1742-43, Elizabeth Andros, and their children of Barrington and Warren town record were: Elizabeth, born Oct. 5, 1743; Hannah, May 1, 1746; Samuel, March 15, 1748; James, April 11, 1750; Lydia, May 4, 1752; Sarah, Nov. 24, 1754; John, April 8, 1757; Molly, April 17, 1759; Rachel, Feb. 8, 1762; and Ruth, May 31, 1764.

(VI) James Humphrey, born April 11, 1750, likely in Barrington, R. I., married it is said in Providence or vicinity Amy Hardy, Harden or Hardin, living for a time after his marriage at Warren, R. I., where his eldest two children were born. Then he removed to Alstead, N. H., and soon thereafter removed to Brookfield, Vt., where other children were born. Mr. Humphrey rendered considerable service in the war of the Revolution, as did many of this Barrington family of Humphrey, one of whom was a major and another a captain, the latter, Capt. John Humphrey, being a brother of James, while still another of his brothers—

Samuel Humphrey—was in the army. James was a sergeant in Capt. Thomas Allen's company, enlisting in February, 1777; he had previously served, and was again enlisted for one year from March 16, 1778. It has been stated that he was in the war from its beginning to its close; was at Valley Forge with Washington. It was not until after his return from the war that he married. His children were: Amy, born in Rhode Island, married William Messinger, of Jericho, Vt.; James, born March 9, 1780, likely in Rhode Island, married Orpha Dow, of Richmond, Vt.; Nancy, born at Brookfield, Vt., married Jesse Thomson, of Jericho, Vt., son of Dr. Thomson, who was the originator of the Thomsonian school of medicine; William was born April 14, 1783; Betsey, born Aug. 31, 1789, at Brookfield, Vt., married Silas Benham, of Jericho, Vt.; Elishaba died unmarried in Jericho, Vt.; John died quite young, unmarried; Ede is mentioned below; Truman died unmarried; Relief, born in 1792, in Brookfield, Vt., married Philander Benham, of Jericho, Vt.; and Dr. Harry, born at Brookfield, Vt., married Clarissa Lee, of Jericho, Vermont.

(VII) Ede Humphrey, son of James, born in 1790 in Richmond or Brookfield, Vt., married Phebe Lee, daughter of Solomon and Louisa N. (Lane) Lee, of Jericho, Vt., where they lived and died. He carried on general farming pursuits, including cattle raising and dairying. He made a specialty of growing potatoes for the starch factories at Burlington, Vt., receiving what in these days seems a ridiculously low price for them—twelve and a half cents a bushel. Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey were members of the Congregational Church at Jericho. Their children were: James Lee, who died in New Bedford, Mass. (he married Maria Bradford, of Fairhaven, Mass.); George W., mentioned below; Edwin, who was killed by lightning (he married Helen Martin, of Jericho, Vt.); and Albert Orlando, of Burlington, Vt., who married Cleo Church, of Underhill, Vermont.

(VIII) GEORGE W. HUMPHREY, son of Ede, born Oct. 7, 1824, in Jericho, Vt., received his early education in the district schools of his native place, later attending the seminary at Jericho. During the winter season for a number of years he followed teaching, being engaged at that work in Jericho and Bolton, Vt., and during the summer followed farming, principally the raising of potatoes, which were sold to the starch mills; he received twelve and a half cents a bushel. In 1843 Mr. Humphrey went to New Bedford, Mass., taught school for

one year in Fairhaven, and then entered the P. G. Macomber grain and flour store, where he was employed for seven years. Later he was in business for himself as a member of the firm of Humphrey Brothers, who dealt in general produce, butter and cheese at the corner of Union and Second streets, New Bedford. After five years he sold out his interest in this concern to his brother, in 1854 moving to Rochester, Plymouth county, where with his savings he bought a large farm, which he still owns. The place is one of the best kept in Rochester, and Mr. Humphrey has about one hundred acres under cultivation, besides about two hundred acres of woodland. He does a large dairy business, keeping about eighty cows, and the cream only is sent daily to New Bedford, where the other crops of the farm are also marketed. A large trade is done in poultry and eggs, Mr. Humphrey keeping between seven hundred and eight hundred chickens. He looked after everything himself until 1881, when he received injuries in a railroad accident which incapacitated him for active work, but he still superintends matters. His son Lawrence C. now assists him in the conduct of the farm, as well as the business details, which are important and numerous.

Mr. Humphrey is a strong Republican in political matters and has always stanchly supported his party and worked for its supremacy. He has taken considerable interest in local public affairs, was selectman for three years, member of the school committee, and has also held minor offices, feeling that no interest of the town is too trivial to receive the consideration of intelligent citizens. In 1872 and 1873 he represented Rochester, Carver, Lakeville, Marion and Mattapoisett in the State Legislature. He is still serving as a trustee of the Rochester public library. He attends the Congregational Church at Rochester.

While employed in New Bedford Mr. Humphrey met his future wife, the daughter of his employer. He was married there to Mary Macomber, who was born Sept. 27, 1834, daughter of Perry G. and Betsy (Allen) Macomber, of New Bedford, and she died Feb. 16, 1902. To this union were born five children: (1) Carrie Frances is unmarried and living at home. (2) George Ede died in young manhood. (3) Chester Williams, born Sept. 20, 1859, has been superintendent of schools for Rochester, Lakeville and Carver for many years. He married Elizabeth Hathaway, daughter of Capt. Judah and Hannah (Lewis) Hathaway, of Rochester, and they have five children, who were born as follows: Albert Lewis, May 5,

1889; Ellen H., March 18, 1893; Judah, Aug. 27, 1896; Pauline, Dec. 28, 1898; Elizabeth Lee, June 10, 1903. (4) Bessie Allen, born Aug. 31, 1862, is unmarried and living at home. (5) Lawrence Clifton, born Oct. 6, 1864, is engaged in farming with his father. He married Lizzie Schouler, daughter of Bruce and Viola (Willis) Schouler, of Boston, Mass., and they have three children: Helen M., born Sept. 27, 1894; Mary Allen, Feb. 1, 1897; Viola Willis, July 31, 1900.

**NICHOLAS AYER CLARK**, late of Brockton, where for a period covering a quarter of a century prior to his death, which occurred June 15, 1908, he was one of that city's successful and enterprising business men, was a native of West Fairlee, Orange Co., Vt., born Aug. 19, 1846, son of Henry H. and Eunice (Emery) Clark.

Mr. Clark was descended from sturdy English stock. His great-grandfather, John Clark, who was a sea captain, came to this country from England in 1782, and his grandfather, William Clark, who was born in Bradford, Orange Co., Vt., served as a soldier in the war of 1812. The latter married a Miss Chase, who lived in the same vicinity, and to them were born five children, three sons and two daughters.

Henry H. Clark, second child in the family of William Clark, and father of the late Nicholas A. Clark, was born in 1813, in Bradford, Vt., and died May 10, 1883, aged sixty-nine years, ten months, six days. His life was devoted to farming, and for a number of years he conducted a large farm, later purchasing a smaller but more valuable place, upon which the remainder of his life was spent. He married Eunice Emery, daughter of Noah Emery, of Groton, Vt., and she died at the age of fifty-seven years, the mother of five children, as follows: Elizabeth A., who married Abner Goodwin, and they reside at Groton, Vt.; Nicholas A., mentioned below; James, who lives at Bradford, Vt., where he is engaged in farming; Jennie, who is the wife of Frank Bagley, and they reside at West Fairlee, Vt.; and George, who is a resident of New York State.

Nicholas Ayer Clark, son of the late Henry H. and Eunice (Emery) Clark, as stated above was born in West Fairlee, Vt., Aug. 19, 1846, and in the common schools of Bradford, Vt., acquired his early educational training. After leaving school he worked on the homestead farm until the time of his enlistment in the service of his country during the Civil war.

ter in the colony of Massachusetts Bay. In the history of that town it is stated that he arrived in New England in 1634, but this statement undoubtedly is an error. There is a tradition that in England his occupation was that of glove making, but in Dorchester he turned his attention to tanning. In 1639 he was admitted to full communion in the church, and in 1640 was made freeman. Jonas Humphrey died in Dorchester, March 19, 1662, his will having been executed March 12 of that year; and it was admitted to probate April 17 following. In it the testator mentions his wife, sons Jonas and James, grandchild Elizabeth Frye, daughter Susanna, wife of Nicholas White. The name of his first wife was Frances —, who was the mother of all of his children, but it is not known whether or not she was living at the time of his immigration to this country. He married for his second wife Jane Weeks, widow of George Weeks, of Dorchester, and a niece of Richard Clapp, also of Dorchester. She was born in Salcombe Regis, England, and died in Dorchester, Massachusetts, August 2, 1668. Children of Jonas and Frances Humphrey: 1. James, born in Wendover, England, about 1608. 2. Jonas, born in Wendover about 1620. 3. Elizabeth, married ~~Wm.~~ Frye. 4. Susanna, married Nicholas White. 5. Sarah, buried in Dorchester in September, 1638.

(II) Deacon Jonas Humphrey, son of Jonas and Frances Humphrey, was born in Wendover, England, about the year 1620, as in 1688 he called himself sixty-eight years old. He came to New England with his father in 1637, was located in Dorchester for a few years and then settled in Weymouth, Massachusetts. It seems, however, that he must have maintained a place of residence in each town, for he held office in Weymouth in 1648, while his two eldest children were born in Dorchester at later dates. He settled permanently in Weymouth in 1653-54, and lived in the north part of the town, at the place called 'old south farm,' and the old homestead on Neck street was kept in the family for nearly two hundred years afterwards. He was a leading man in Weymouth, where he was made freeman in 1653, and held the office of selectman many years, a part of the time being chairman of the board. For many years also he was deacon in the church. He died February 11, 1698-99, aged seventy-nine years, and his will, dated August 6, 1692-93, was admitted to probate March 30, 1699. Deacon Humphrey married probably in Dorchester,

but neither the name of his wife nor the date of their marriage are known. She was called Martha. They had six children: 1. Samuel, born in Dorchester, 1649, married Mary Torrey. 2. Nathaniel, born in Dorchester, 1652, married Elizabeth —. 3. Jonas, born in Weymouth, February 24, 1655, married Mary Phillips. 4. John, born in Weymouth, August 31, 1658. 5. Sarah, born in Weymouth, May 16, 1661. 6. James, born in Weymouth, September 10, 1665, married first, Thankful —, second, Margaret Torrey.

(III) Samuel Humphrey, eldest of the six children of Deacon Jonas and Martha Humphrey, was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, in 1649, and went with his father's family to Weymouth, where he was made freeman in 1678, and afterwards was selectman there before he removed with his family to Barrington, Rhode Island, about 1699. He married in Weymouth, Mary Torrey, born February 14, 1657, daughter of James and Ann (Hatch) Torrey, of Scituate, Massachusetts. Samuel and Mary (Torrey) Humphrey had eight children, all born in Weymouth: 1. Sarah, born October 27, 1679, married — Pearce. 2. Samuel, born December 23, 1681. 3. John, born February 19, 1683. 4. Josiah, born December 9, 1686, married Hannah —. 5. James, born October 21, 1689. 6. Martha, born February 1, 1692, married — Cooper. 7. Mary, born January 30, 1693, unmarried in 1732. 8. Jonas.

(IV) John Humphrey, third child of Samuel and Mary (Torrey) Humphrey, was born in Weymouth, Massachusetts, February 19, 1683, and married (first), October 23, 1707, Sarah Cooper, who died in 1724. He married (second), March 17, 1725, Rebecca (Peggy) Perry, born January 4, 1691, daughter of Samuel and Mary Perry. John and Rebecca (Perry) Humphrey had two children: 1. Sarah, born January 13, 1726, married, September 20, 1744, David Peck, of Barrington, Rhode Island. 2. John, born August 9, 1727.

(V) John Humphrey, Jr., son of John and Rebecca (Perry) Humphrey, his second wife, was born in Rehoboth, Massachusetts, August 9, 1727, and married, December 24, 1747, Martha Walker, born December 22, 1729, daughter of Ephraim and Mary (Abel) Walker. Children of John, Jr., and Martha (Walker) Humphrey: 1. Mary, born October 2, 1748. 2. Lydia, born June 22, 1750, died young. 3. John, born January 17, 1753. 4. Abel, born February 10, 1755. 5. David, born May 15, 1757. 6. Sarah, born September

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1. JONAS HUMPHREY. b. 1587. Wendover, Buckinghamshire, England. d. Mar. 19, 1662. Dorchester, Mass. m. 1st Frances Cooley. m. 2nd, Jane Clap. d. Aug. 2, 1668. Sister of Roger Clap and widow of George Weeks.
  2. i JAMES HUMPHREY. b. 1608. Wendover, England.
  - ii ELIZABETH HUMPHREY. b. 1610. Wendover, England. d. 1653. Dorchester, Mass. m. 1st William Frye. m. 2nd Thomas Daggett.
  - iii SUSANNA HUMPHREY. b. 1615. Wendover, England. m. Nicholas White.
  - iv SARAH HUMPHREY. b. . d. 1638. Dorchester, Mass.
  - v JONAS HUMPHREY. b. 1620. Wendover, England. d. Feb. 9, 1699. Dorchester, Mass. m. Martha.
2. JAMES HUMPHREY (JONAS 1). b. 1608. Wendover, England. d. May 12, 1686. Dorchester, Mass. m. Mary . d. May 7, 1677. Dorchester, Mass.
  3. i MARY HUMPHREY. b. 1635. Wendover, England.
  - ii HOPESTILL HUMPHREY. bap. June 10, 1649. Dorchester, Mass.
  - iii ISAAC HUMPHREY. b.
3. MARY HUMPHREY (James 2, Jonas 1). b. 1635. Wendover, England. d. Apr. 21, 1676. Dorchester, Mass. m. 1662. Obediah Hawes.

(See Hawes genealogy.)

The Humphrey Family in America. By Frederick Humphrey.

Dorchester, Mass., Town Records.



*Handwritten notes:*  
From  
Smith  
Library

# THE HEIRS OF PELHAM HUMPHRIES

How big oil, big money, and big dreams launched one family on a 90-year squabble

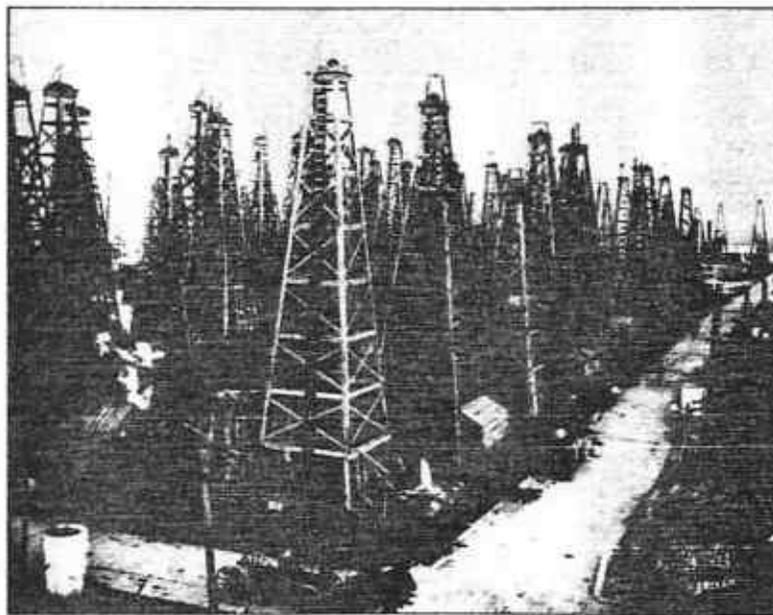
By SCOTT KLUG

**B**ROWN PEREGOY is on fire, overwhelmed, gripped by a holy fever as he preaches his version of the gospel of Pelham. "And so Elijah Humphries and Molly Perry begat William and Vernon and Betsy Jane...." With each name of the genealogy Peregoy slaps the back of his right hand into his left palm. "...and William and Leasy Hutson begat Henry, David, George, Lucinda, William, James, John, and Sarah Elizabeth...." On the sound of the crack, he pivots and struts in the other direction. "...and Elijah Humphries and Betsy Jane Harden begat Pelham Humphries...." As he traces each generation of the sacred

lineage his pace grows more frantic, his face turns redder and redder. "Pelham," he says, invoking his deity. "Sweet, sweet Pelham."

There is no vast congregation of unbelievers here—just a single reporter along with Peregoy's wife and a friend. But to Brown Peregoy, the size of the audience has never mattered—he just can't help himself.

Pelham Humphries was Brown Peregoy's great, great, great uncle, and Peregoy is obsessed with him. With his life. His death. And the thousands of acres of east Texas flatland he once owned.



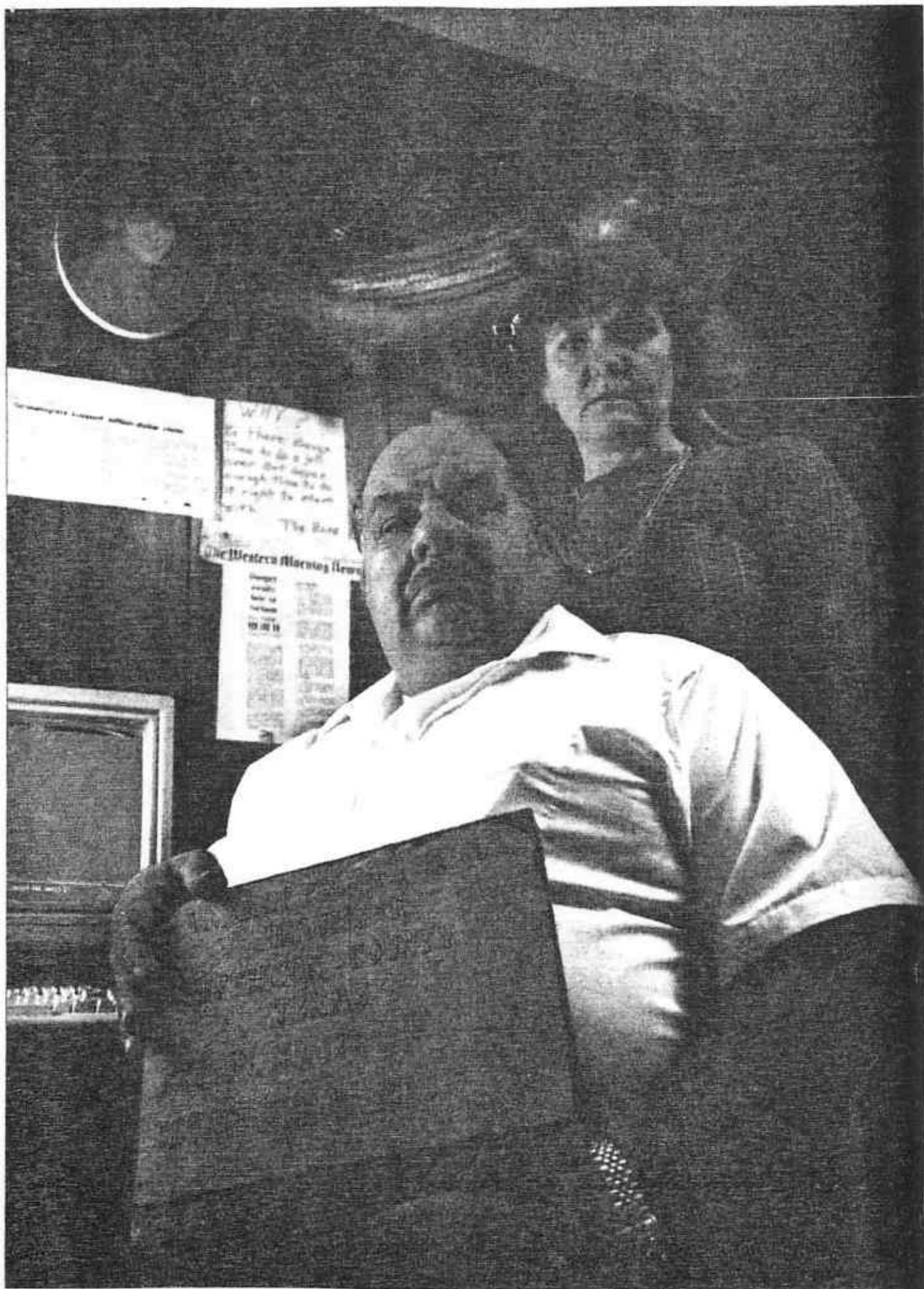
Heirs apparent? Brown and Lena Peregoy (left) are laying an ancestral claim to the fortune that poured from the Spindletop oilfield (above).

"I really have bad pains in my chest now," says Peregoy, referring to the heart attack that nearly killed him nine years ago. "This thing keeps me going, keeps me motivated. Gives me a reason for living."

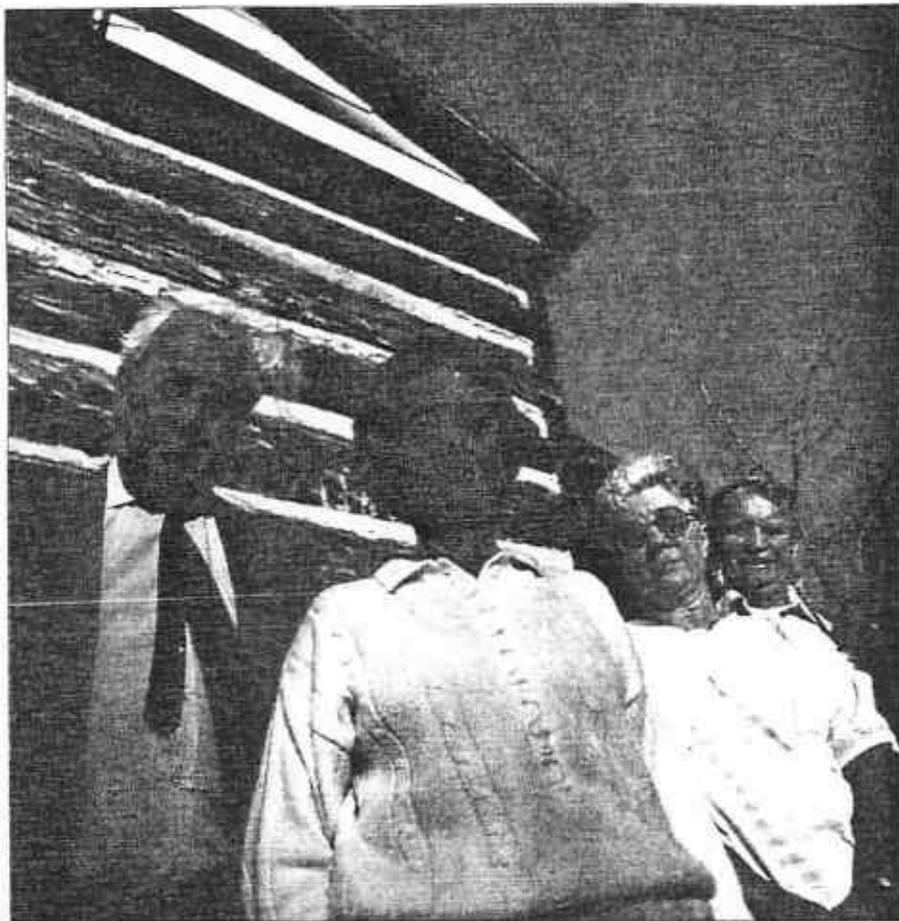
Brown Peregoy isn't the only one of his family who finds hope in the person of Pelham Humphries. It is a family obsession. Since the turn of the century most of the Humphries clan has been consumed with the idea of righting an injustice done when Texas was still a possession of Mexico. There is, however, much more at stake than family honor. At stake is a pile of money not counted in millions, but in billions.

Most of us dream about inheriting money some day. We fantasize about a rich uncle with four hundred shares of original IBM stock misplaced in the garage. Or the spinster aunt with the map of the Lost Dutchman's mine stashed away in her safe-deposit box. But Pelham Humphries' fortune is no idle daydream. The land he once owned was worth a bundle at the turn of the century. It still is today.

If there were justice in the world, Pelham Humphries' heirs would run in the same social circles as the Rockefellers and Carnegies. Today Brown Peregoy would be heading up the Humphries Foundation. There'd be Humphries libraries on



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**Family feud: Nadine Decker (center) leads a group of Humphries heirs wary of Brown Peregoy's intentions.**

college campuses. A sprawling medical complex in Beaumont named for the family. Maybe there would even be a PBS drama series, the Humphries Hall of Fame. But Pelham Humphries and his heirs say that such things never happened because their uncle was swindled out of his fortune.

And they'll tell you it wasn't a woman that cost Pelham his bundle. Nor was it cards, or even demon rum. Instead it was another dark liquid that tempts men's souls: oil. Thick Texas crude. Satan, according to Brown Peregoy's theology, drives a canary-yellow Cadillac, wears cowboy boots, and works for an oil company.

The heirs of Pelham Humphries are convinced that somewhere in a bank in Texas is a \$200 billion inheritance just waiting to be claimed. The money was put in the banks by the oil companies that, in Peregoy's mind, were aware that someday they'd have to pay Pelham's relatives for the way they stole his land.

And now, after decades of lawsuits and cover-ups, Brown Peregoy says he

and his family are close to collecting.

AT SUNSET THE mountains on the Tennessee-Virginia border turn a steel gray-blue. There are no steep, jagged peaks, just gentle hills that seem to roll on forever. It was in these shallow, green valleys that three of Tennessee's most beloved folk heroes flourished. If you head northeast out of the area's major city, Johnson City, toward Elizabethton, keep your eye out for a historical marker on the left hand side of the road. The marker will guide you a few hundred yards to a tiny stream where once stood the birch tree upon which Daniel Boone proudly carved into the bark the fact that he'd "killed a bar." The birch tree is long gone; in its place is a rather undistinguished looking rock in the center of a small park. If you head the other direction, south towards Knoxville, it's easy to find the roadside tavern in which Davy Crockett grew up. Today it's a museum.

As for the third hero—well, you won't find any historical markers or shrines dedicated to him. Still, in these parts, Pelham Humphries may be the biggest hero of all. For generations the tale of Pelham Humphries, a mixture of fact, fiction, and folklore, has been told in

front porch rockers and at family dinner tables. It's a story that, like Tennessee moonshine, keeps getting better with age.

Some say it was a knife fight. Others think a gun may have been involved. Regardless, the fact is that Pelham Humphries left Ben Johnson for dead. The fight happened at a corn shucking party up on Cripple Creek, near Dividing Ridge. Farming was never easy in these narrow, rock-strewn valleys, and just getting a crop was an accomplishment. The corn would feed the livestock through the winter. In the chill of the morning there would be grits and hot corn bread. And then there would be the most important product of all—hooch. White lightning. In this rugged hill country the corn harvest was time for some serious partying.

No one remembers anymore if it was Ben Johnson or Pelham who had too much to drink. What started the argument nobody's too sure about anymore either. But the ending is well known. The argument ended with Johnson lying on the cabin floor clutching his stomach, blood oozing from the wound.

Murder in 1828 was a hanging crime, so Pelham figured he'd better hightail it out of there; he fled in the middle of the night. Most accounts agree that he soon committed his second capital offense when he stole a horse in Hawkins County, Tennessee. Afterward, he got the hell out of Tennessee completely and headed down the Watauga River in a flat bottom boat. With him were his young wife, Sudie Brown, and a long-time friend, William English.

Pelham and his wife and friend eventually settled in the area of present day Beaumont, Texas. At that time it was still under the control of the Mexican government. Raising cattle was the area's biggest business. Stealing cattle wasn't far behind.

According to Peregoy, this time Pelham was on the right side of the law: He signed up with the Mexican government as a bounty hunter to track down rustlers. In 1835 the Mexican government rewarded him for his service with a land grant of 4,428 acres.

For two years Pelham and his wife tried to make a living on the unfriendly land dominated by scrub brush and marshes, but farming just wasn't in

*Freelance writer Scott Klug is anchorman for WKOW-TV, the ABC affiliate in Madison, Wisconsin.*

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Pelham's blood. Maybe the land was just too harsh. Maybe his spirit was broken when his wife died, childless, of a fever in the winter of 1835. In any case, Pelham just walked away from the homestead and moved into a boarding house near Nacogdoches, Texas. Soon there was another fight. When it was over Pelham was on the ground, dead. It was September 5, 1835. He was 37 years old.

While his kinfolk in Tennessee soon learned about Pelham's untimely demise, it apparently didn't upset the family all that much. Nobody moved from the Volunteer State to farm his land. To this day, no one is quite sure where Pelham is buried, although occasionally an old-timer swears he's seen a tombstone. The fact of the matter is that nobody gave much of a damn about their outlaw relative Pelham Humphries until 1901 when a huge roar woke the family with a start—the roar of the legendary Spindletop gusher.

FOR FIVE YEARS Pattio Higgins had been saying that it was going to happen. In fact, he had sold three business partners on his hunch that there was oil in the Spindletop salt dome just outside the sleepy town of Beaumont, Texas, population 9,000. In most areas of the country the salt dome wouldn't have attracted a second look. But in east Texas, where the landscape is as flat as a bowling alley, the slight 25-foot rise looked like a mountain ridge.

Day in and day out, year after year, the riggers had drilled—deeper than any well on the Gulf Coast. Company after company had gone broke trying to prove Higgins' theory. In time, he too went broke and had to sell his share in the venture. Eventually, a lease on the property was taken by Captain Anthony Lucas.

Most oil men thought Higgins and Lucas were nuts. Those who didn't couldn't figure out how to beat the marshland—as soon as they drilled a foot in that muck the shaft would fill again with water and sand.

Finally the latest set of drillers, the Hamill brothers out of Corsicana, Texas, thought they had it licked. First they sank a pipe that was eight inches in diameter into the ground, and then ran a second pipe within that one. Still, after weeks of work, they too were ready to

**In 1835, Pelham Humphries took title to a parcel of land that, 66 years later, would be the source of a huge fortune.**

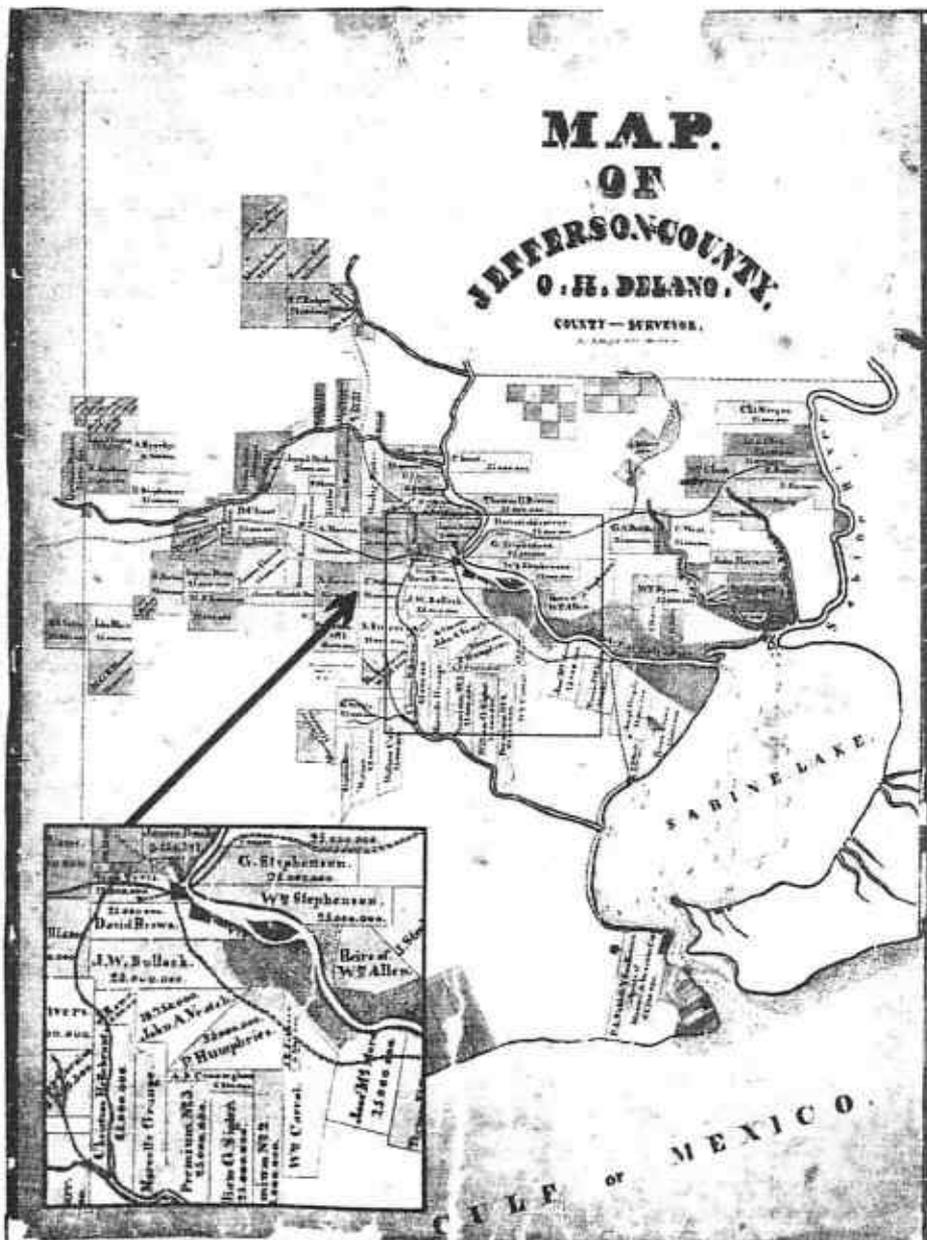
call it quits.

Then on the morning of January 10, 1901, came an angry roar from deep within the ground. Soon a column of thick mud rained down on the drilling crew below. Stunned, they began cleaning up the mess only to feel the whole derrick shake again—and then they heard an explosion that sounded like a cannon blast. The crewmen ran for their lives. The thousand feet of piping blew clear out of the hole, ripping into pieces and scattering for hundreds of yards. That was followed by a gusher of rock and gas, and then, minutes later, by a torrent of dark, green oil that shot straight up 100 feet into the air.

They say you could hear the roar of the Spindletop gusher a mile away. In the nine days the well ran wild it pro-

duced 800,000 barrels of oil. Today, 88 years later, those same fields are still the site of dozens of active, working wells. These are the wells that became the basis for Gulf and helped make Chevron, Mobil, and Texaco rich. The Spindletop strike turned Beaumont into a boomtown and Texas into the oil capital of the world. Land maps from the Mexican government—which controlled Texas in 1835—show that part of the site of the Spindletop strike once belonged to some farmer gunned down in a bar fight. Some guy named Pelham Humphries.

NOT LONG AFTER the Spindletop strike, rumors began to filter back to Tennessee that somehow Pelham's heirs might be entitled to a great deal of money. His brothers and sister were long



SELA TERCERO



PARA EL BIENIO DE

DOS REALES

1834 Y 1835.

*Peticion*

*Comisionado especial de la Oficina del Landman.  
Straw & Zavala*

*William Humphries natural de los Estados Unidos del Norte, en el reporte hecho a V. me presente y digo que siendo por las ganancias de las leyes de esta Union de este Estado he venido con mi familia con tanto de dos personas a radicarme en la referida provincia de S. E. de los Estados Unidos en virtud de la Certificacion q. adjunto le acompaño. V. tuviera a bien admitirme en clase de Colonos y concederme un sitio de terreno en los baldios de dicha provincia, de cuyo favor, me he servido agradecer. Dado a favor de San Agustín y del 27 de Abril. El Sr. Wm. Humphries*

*Procede: Para el interesado con la certificacion que acompaño a este expediente a que corresponde, para que informe sobre la solicitud que antecede. San Agustín y del 27 de Abril. Sr. Comisionado. Certifico que el interesado es uno de los colonos que se introdujo en cumplimiento de las indicaciones hechas en el decreto de la Oficina del Landman en fecha de 1834. Por tanto se le concede el terreno que pide y se le da la orden de que se le entregue el terreno.*

dead, but their children were still very much alive.

After the initial strike, oil men scrambled madly for the rights to any piece of land in the vicinity. By 1902, 285 wells were operating on Spindletop Hill, and more than 600 oil companies had been formed. At the time the land was subdivided into amazingly tiny parcels—in some cases the leased parcels were just big enough for the oil derrick itself, and the owners of one derrick frequently had to rent space on an adjacent derrick to hold their pumps and water.

To solve the ownership disputes, oil companies hired lawyers to track down heirs. The lawyers got \$50 to recover the power of attorney. For each acre signed over, the lawyer got another \$50.

On July 26, 1903, a Texas court intervened and sent out a summons searching for heirs to the disputed land. Included in the call were "the unknown heirs of Pelham Humphries."

According to Humphries lore, in 1902 Jess Humphries of Green County, Tennessee, actually collected. For \$3,500 a month for the rest of his life, Jess signed away his interest in the land that had once belonged to his uncle. Peregoy says the deed assigned the oil company clear rights to 1/16th of the land. Although the rest of the family should have been equally easy to locate, nobody else was ever contacted. The family says that's because all the oil companies ever wanted was one signature.

"The oil companies were just want-

**What's in a name? A lot, say heirs who feel the name change on this deed means someone stole their inheritance.**

ing something to hold the land with," contends Peregoy. "They were stalling for time until they could get all of the oil out of the ground."

When the knock at the door failed to materialize, the jilted heirs turned to the courts. Soon, every enclave of Humphries in Tennessee had its own lawyers and its own suits. A May 31, 1931, Knoxville Journal headline reads: "35 years of litigation finds Humphrey [sic] Heirs still hopeful." But lawsuit after lawsuit ended with the oil companies still on top. In time there was as much animosity between feuding pockets of Humphries as there was between the family and the oil companies.

In the 1930's, Brown Peregoy's uncle L.B. Glover stepped forward to unite the family and lead it out of darkness into the bright light of prosperity. Glover was a preacher, and the first heir to try and lead a concerted legal fight to win back the family's money. Reverend Glover would hold meetings of the heirs at the Lick Creek Christian Church, which sits in the middle of a long valley near where Pelham is believed to have grown up. By day, Glover would preach the riches of heaven. By night, he'd preach the riches of Pelham Humphries.

"He was fiery, he'd get you all hepped up," says Bob Carr, who runs a wood burning stove store outside Johnson City and is another distant nephew of Pelham's. "It was almost like an old tent revival."

For the mostly poor families who attended Reverend Glover's services, Uncle Pel, as he came to be known, held an almost mystical spell. He became a patron saint of sorts to be invoked in hard times. "The saying in those days," says Carr, "was I'll pay you off when Pelham pays off."

IN MARCH OF 1933, Reverend Glover finally raised enough money to travel to his Mecca, the holy city of Beaumont, Texas. The two day train trip cost a whopping \$14. Glover's plan was to search through courthouse records that might be helpful in the family's planned court case. Glover and his traveling companions also wanted just to get a feel for the city where Pelham had been screwed out of his future fortune. One of his traveling companions was R.W. Nave.



Sad Pelham balla

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**Sad songs say so much — the legend of Pelham Humphries has given rise to ballads about a great lost fortune.**

Today, R.W. Nave is 84 years old. The day I caught up with him he was swinging a pickax, installing a new septic system. Although it's been more than 50 years since he made the trip to Beaumont, Nave remembers it very well. And what he mostly remembers is disappointment.

About 6 A.M. on the day after their arrival, Glover and Nave flagged down a taxi. The cab driver not only knew the tale of Pelham, he drove them to the cemetery where he was buried. It was located a half mile from their hotel.

"There's a tombstone, a concrete slab about as long as this pickax handle," Nave says. "It had his name on it, when he was born in Watauga, Tennessee, and when he died."

From there, however, the trip quickly went downhill. The courthouse staff was uncooperative. The sheriff threatened to throw them out of town. They left for Tennessee the next morning empty handed, but the experience made Glover combative. He was convinced there had been a cover-up. For 25 more years he would carry on the sacred fight.

Nave, on the other hand, would have nothing more to do with the lawsuits and the talk of a vast, unclaimed fortune. He began to doubt the legend of Pelham Humphries. And he became convinced that even if there was a kernel of truth in the story, the family would never see a penny. The opposition, the oil companies and their fancy lawyers, was too slick for a family of farmers and laborers from east Tennessee. "In the

future when they passed the hat," Nave says. "I told them I ain't got nothing to throw in. You can't fool me like that. I been there."

Reverend Glover had planned to file suit as soon as he returned from Texas, but tough times after the Depression and the onset of World War II stopped him. It wasn't until 1947 that Glover and 200 supporters filed a multi-million dollar suit against the oil companies and the families that controlled the leases in question. But on November 10, 1948, a Federal judge ruled against the Humphries family. Essentially the judge in *Glover et al. v. McFaddin et al.* told the would-be heirs that before they could prove the oil companies owed Pelham's family money, they had to prove they were Pelham's family. In 1951, another lawsuit was dismissed because the family couldn't produce names and addresses of all the Humphries heirs within 30 days.

So Glover next planned to hire a genealogist to prove the ties between the litigants and Pelham. But in 1957, before that could happen, Glover died. He went to his heavenly reward certain that there was a reward to be had here on Earth, but that his family had been done in again by the oil companies and their high priced attorneys.

BROWN PEREGOY SAT straight up in bed. It was 1979, the deep of the night. Peregoy took a look at the clock and noticed as he wiped the sleep from his eyes that it was 3 A.M. He reached over and stirred Lena, his wife of 30 years.

"What?" she asked in a small, groggy voice.

"We can win it, Honey. I can win it," he told her.

"Brown, what in God's name are you talking about in the middle of the night?" she asked.

"The Pelham Humphries case. I do believe I can win it," he said excitedly.

"Do you want to get kicked out of bed?" she warned him. "You promised me you'd never bring that name up again." Disgusted, Lena rolled over and went back to sleep.

Like Brown, Lena was a distant relative of Pelham Humphries. She too had grown up in a family where Pelham's name was invoked at every family gathering from birthdays to Thanksgiving. It wasn't long before someone invariably would start spinning the tale of Pelham's fate. While the turkey was being carved, the relatives would figure out how to

carve up Pelham's fortune. Lena had grown tired of the stories. For her, the legend of Pelham Humphries was not a legacy of which to be proud, but a tale that brought snickers from friends and neighbors. She too was convinced that her family was kidding itself.

"When I got to be a teenager," she remembers, "and the name would come up, I'd just walk out of the house."

One night in 1957, when Lena and Brown were first courting, Brown brought up the name on the way to a drive-in movie. She was 15. He was 18. At the time she was snuggled up next to him. But at the very mention of Pelham's name she slid to the other side of the front seat and hugged the door.

"No way, no way," she remembers saying. "Don't ever mention that man's name to me again."

For 22 years he kept his word—until the night he was struck by the vision and bolted up in bed to resume his family's holy quest.

For Brown Peregoy, there was no sleeping that night. Like a prophet of old he was possessed by the family dream. "It must have been 10 years since I thought about the case," he says. "I was dreaming about it. I guess it was just somewhere in the back of my mind."

He climbed out of bed and tiptoed to the basement where he began ripping open the boxes of Pelham Humphries files piled in the corner, records left him by his uncle, and his uncle before him, records collected by others in the family. There were copies of land deeds, some in Spanish; genealogy charts; yellowed letters; and volumes of court papers.

*(Continued on page 58)*



**So far, the real money from Pelham Humphries has been made from T-shirts and other souvenirs of the patriarch.**

## HUMPHRIES

(Continued from page 35)

including dog-eared affidavits—the collected dreams of the entire clan. He blew off the dust and began reading.

In the weeks to come he continued the all-night vigils. "I'd go to bed and start thinking about something, and get up at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning and go digging at the boxes to see if it was right. I read and studied the material. At times it was just as if I was looking over Uncle Pelham's shoulder."

Working with the intensity of a jailhouse lawyer trying to overturn his own death sentence, Peregoy read every court case involving oil he could get his hands on. He is sure that somewhere in a Texas bank vault there's a huge pool of money set aside for the Humphries heirs. The oil companies put it in trust, claims Peregoy, because they're required by law to do so whenever a deed is disputed.

The oil companies say that since they have never questioned their Spindletop

leases, they've never set aside any money.

Once he studied the situation, Peregoy became convinced there was no way a handful of heirs were going to beat the giants of the Fortune 500. "How could you win?" he asked his relatives. "They can fight you with your own money. Uncle Pel's money."

Peregoy's idea was to form an organization of hundreds of Pelham's relatives and pool their resources to hire the first-rate lawyers and genealogists it would take to fight the oil giants. It was the same strategy his uncle tried just in the Volunteer State but could never pull off. Peregoy knew he could never raise the money from the Tennessee Humphries alone; he would need the help of Humphries heirs all over the South. So in the spring of 1986, he gave himself 90 days to raise \$87,500.

Peregoy took the story of Pelham on the road, staging tent revivals that played to packed houses in Tennessee, Georgia, Louisiana, Florida, and Texas. Peregoy had found a way to plug into the thousands of Southerners who counted Pel-

ham Humphries a shirt-tail relative.

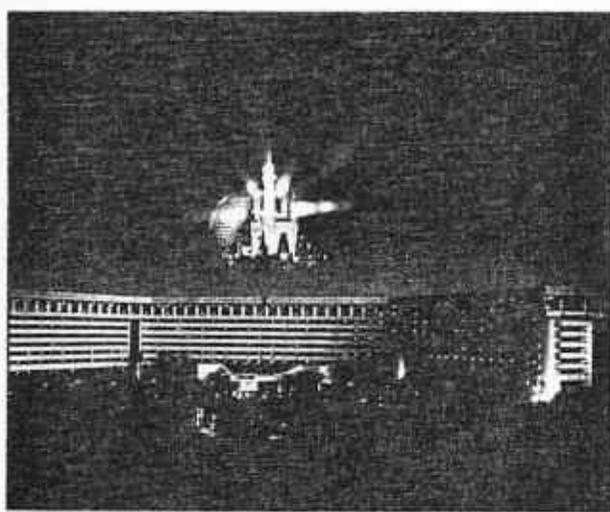
In 45 days, half the time he had given himself, Peregoy exceeded his wildest expectations. He raised \$225,000, nearly triple his original goal. By the end of 1986 the Humphries Heirs Trust had 5,000 members and a \$500,000 budget. Brown Peregoy was ready to take on Texas oil.

BUT FIRST, HE had to take on some of his own kin. True to the spirit of their fighting namesake, the descendants of Pelham Humphries had circled wagons in two warring camps. The problem was, Peregoy had made a number of enemies during an attempt to establish an earlier organization called the "Pelham Humphries Heirs Association."

In 1984, Peregoy had cut a deal with Utah genealogist James Petty to research the family trees of folks who wanted to join the Humphries lawsuit. It sounded like a wonderful deal for members of the "Association"—until Petty let it be known that he was sending a 20 percent cut back to the organization. The only rub was that no one could find the rebate.

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Soon a cancelled check turned up for \$3,200 with Brown Peregoy's endorsement on the back. Peregoy resigned a short time later—because his feelings were hurt, he says. Critics say he was canned.

The original heirs' organization survived after Peregoy's resignation, and today it has a membership of more than 1,800 members and is headed by Nadine Decker of Johnson City, Tennessee, another distant relative of Uncle Pel's and of Brown Peregoy. Neither group has any use for the other. As for genealogist Petty, he soon refused to deal with either group, saying that the whole Humphries tale is a baseless myth; he also accused Peregoy of knowingly embezzling the money. In turn, Peregoy called Petty in newspapers "a lying son-of-a-bitch."

With Petty out of the picture, the warring parties soon hired new genealogists. And as you might expect, these genealogists didn't like each other, either. Brown Peregoy hired Harold Brooks-Baker, director of London's prestigious Burke's Peerage. At the time of his hiring, Brooks-Baker told the *Times of London* that the

Humphries story is "a tale of money, murder, and passion that makes 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty' combined look like the simple tale of country folk."

Meanwhile, Nadine Decker's group hired Britisher Hugh Peskett, a long-time antagonist of Brooks-Baker. In fact, says Peskett, he quit Burke's Peerage when the firm failed to pay him \$18,000 in fees. Peskett, who researched the ancestry of Jimmy Carter, George Bush, and Ronald Reagan, says Burke's Peerage is \$1 million in debt and teetering on bankruptcy. (The company has recently reorganized.)

In addition, the feuding heirs have also hired separate law firms. Peregoy has opted for Wilson, Wilson & Cupp, home-grown legal talent from nearby Mountain City, Tennessee. Decker's group has turned to a high-powered Fairfax, Virginia, lawyer, B. VanDenburg Hall.

No one in either group—lawyers, genealogists, or heirs—will talk with anyone in the other, and there is open dislike on both sides. Several years ago Bob Carr, a longtime friend of Brown

Peregoy, decided to play a prank on their rivals. Carr rented a limousine and had an out-of-town friend dress up in a three-piece suit. Posing as a Texas lawyer, the friend drove around town asking for directions to Carr's house. "When the driver brought the limo back through town, everyone was on the porch to see the Texas lawyer and his chauffeur. The talk was that Uncle Pel had finally paid off," Carr remembers with a laugh. "It was worth the \$100 rental on the limousine to see the look on their faces."

The stunt angered Decker and her supporters. "I don't believe we'll ever shake hands," says Decker. She and her backers haven't had any dealings with Peregoy for years and don't plan to in the near future. She claims that each month more members leave Peregoy's organization and join hers. So for now two separate organizations, each with substantial war chests, plot their attack on Texas oil.

IN BEAUMONT, THE threat of one more Humphries lawsuit brings little

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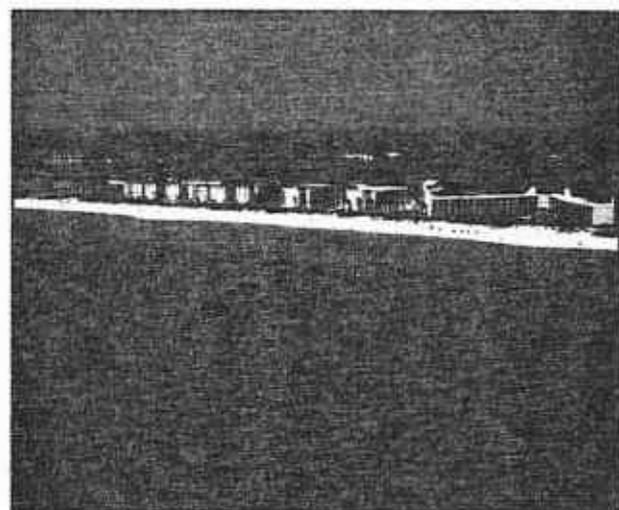
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more than a shrug of the shoulders. Texas oil people seem bored by the whole idea, and in no place do they appear less concerned than at the Jefferson County courthouse.

So many would-be Humphries heirs stumble through these doors each month that County Clerk Lolita Ramos has a couple of form letters prepared that her clerks routinely hand out. "There is no Pelham Humphries estate in the county," one letter begins. "...We have no further information regarding Mr. Humphries such as date of birth or death, nor place of birth, nor place of death," states the other.

Each month the letters go out to such would-be heirs as Jim Stewart of Leura NSW Australia, who wrote on May 7, 1987, asking for the "name of the trustee of the Estate of the late Pelham Humphries." Some, like Ramona Humphries of Bremerton, Washington, seem to think the county is ready to reach for the checkbook as soon as their letter arrives. "I understand you are looking for possible Humphries heirs," she writes. "I have three children, Mona, Maurine, and Matthew."

The other major pilgrimage site in Beaumont for Humphries heirs is the federal courthouse on the other side of town. Page through the indexes here and you'll find line after line of Humphries heirs lawsuits, nearly two dozen in all. Ask clerk Robin Dubuisson about the cases and she'll roll her eyes. Dubuisson, a striking blond with a sweet smile, loses her Texas hospitality at the sound of Pelham's name.

"They start asking questions like I should know the whole history of their families," she says. The inquiries come in spurts—usually close to the time when the latest suit is about to be filed. "It's like the Humphries heirs are all chained up," she says. "And then they're let off the chains and come rushing in here."

To get a firsthand look at the town the Humphries think is rightly theirs, I took a drive through Beaumont. On the south end of the city, near Lamar University, there's a monument to Captain Lucas and his famous gusher. Once the 58-foot granite obelisk stood on the oil fields themselves, but the land began to slump and the memorial was moved. Right next door to the monument is Gladys City, a recreation of a city block at the time of the Spindletop strike. The project was completed for the Bicenten-

nial. A wooden oil derrick dominates the turn-of-the-century skyline, as it did back then. Surrounding the derrick is a careful reproduction of the businesses on a busy city street: A saloon, a bank, a grocery store. Vintage photographs of the men who made this city are prominently displayed in the shops of Gladys City. Nowhere will you find a picture, or a mention, of Pelham Humphries.

What do we really know about Pelham Humphries? According to David L. Hartman, former curator of The Spindletop Museum at Lamar University, most of the story Pelham's relatives push is pure mythology with a few facts sprinkled in. Hartman doesn't dispute the fact that Pelham Humphries indeed once owned

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### *Proving the Humphries family got conned out of land is very difficult.*

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the land that was the site of the Spindletop oil strike. The Mexican land grant still on file in the Jefferson County courthouse shows that Pelham, "a native of the north of Tennessee" and his wife applied for the land on September 27, 1834. "I have come with my family consisting of two persons to settle in the said enterprise of his Excellency Lorenzo de Zavala if...you should deem it proper to admit me as a colonist," reads Pelham's petition. On February 14, 1835, Pelham got his grant. From that point onward, the Humphries family and professional historians agree on very little.

The former museum curator can't figure out how the family can begin to prove its case when no one is even sure where, when, or how Pelham died. In the past, other Humphries heirs claimed he wasn't murdered in Nacogdoches in 1835, but was hanged in Houston in the 1840's. Some say he still paid taxes on the land until 1848. Hartman is delighted by one story that says Pelham became a county clerk in Oregon, where he died peacefully in his sleep of old age. Incidentally, despite R.W. Nave's claim, there is no Pelham Humphries tombstone any-

where in Beaumont.

If the details of Pelham's life are so scarce, how then will the heirs ever prove their case in court? With a great deal of difficulty, it seems to Hartman. The heirs' argument is so convoluted that it makes the Kennedy assassination conspiracy look easy to crack. According to Perego, Pelham Humphries was shot to death at the Hawthorne boarding house on the orders of one William McFadden. Perego says Pelham was murdered because he was about to arrest McFadden for rustling cattle. By having Humphries gunned down, McFadden escaped arrest, and could also then lay claim to Humphries' 3,000 acres of land for his growing cattle operation.

Ultimately the land did end up in McFadden's possession, and there's even a suspicious deed. Jefferson County courthouse records show that on October 6, 1835, a month and a day after Pelham's murder, the name on the deed had been changed to "William Humphries." Who's that? No one knows. While Pelham had a brother named William, there's no evidence that he stepped outside of Tennessee. The document itself even looks curious. On one line Pelham is crossed out, and then William scribbled over the top of it. When oil was finally discovered on the land at the turn of the century, the McFadden family—already rich from its cattle operations—hit the jackpot with the Spindletop strike.

But proving the Humphries family got conned out of the land 150 years after it supposedly happened is very difficult to do. Making the case even harder to prove in court is the fact that the heirs showed no interest in Pelham's ranch whatsoever until oil was discovered on the land.

"How can you make the argument that Pelham was shot because someone knew oil was going to be discovered on the property 70 years in the future?" scoffs historian Hartman.

Indeed, the gap between Pelham's death and the Spindletop strike has been noted time after time in earlier Humphries lawsuits. The Fifth U.S. Court of Appeals in the 1968 *Humphries v. Texas Gulf Sulphur Company* put the conflicting stories in perspective, and the legal issues sharply into focus. "Our brief encounter with this litigation has uncovered a controversy so complicated, conflicting, and confusing that no one will know the exact history of the land."

wrote Circuit Judge Homer Thornberry. The court goes on to say that whatever merits the Humphries may have had, the fact that the litigation comes 125 years after the land deals makes the case worthless.

"These endless suits have been a harassment to the land and mineral owners as well as a useless expense of time and money by the litigants and the court," wrote Judge Thornberry. But the judge may have summed it up best when he wrote: "Unlike old soldiers, expectant heirs never fade away."

EVERY TIME THE courts or historians laugh at their claims, the Humphries family just grows more convinced of a cover-up. At the Humphries Heirs headquarters near Gray, Tennessee, the phones ring constantly. Each week 3,000 pieces of mail move through these offices. There are members in 50 states and seven countries. A typical week includes letters from Richmond, Virginia; Gulfport, Mississippi; Riverside, California; Grand Junction, Colorado; Mesa, Arizona; and New Albany, Indiana.

Brown Perego and his family once ran an open air fruit and flea market out of this concrete building. Today the cash crop is Pelham Humphries souvenirs. Pelham T-shirts hang from twine in the center of the room; on the front of the T-shirt is an artist's rendering of Uncle Pel. On a table in the back of the room sits the current hot seller: "The Ballad of Pelham Humphries" by a group called Railway Express, available on record or cassette. To the sound of steel guitar and fiddle you can hum along the chorus: "Bring that big oil down boys, bring that oil down."

The headquarters is staffed by Brown Perego, his family, and various volunteers. At this point, however, the closest any of Perego's employees has gotten to a fortune is when he's handled the checkbook of the Humphries Heir's Trust. With 6,000 members paying a hefty initiation fee, plus annual dues, the association has collected nearly \$900,000. The organization has already paid out several hundred thousand dollars to two Tennessee law firms, a British genealogist, a Texas land surveyor, and a large Texas law firm.

So even if the family doesn't win the lawsuit, there's still a huge pile of cash lying around that Brown Perego and the officers of his organization now con-

trol. In fact, cynics say that Perego has already tapped into Uncle Pel's fortune, even if the rest of the family finally loses.

"We're very concerned about the money," says Decker. "Our books are open to everyone. His aren't."

"My sense of fair play is violated," says historian Hartman. "He's collecting all of that money from desperate people, and the association has no chance of winning."

Perego says not to worry and points out that his organization put a legal notice in the local newspaper refusing any more members or their \$125 initiation fee. He says the organization has already raised enough money to fund its day in court.

ON FEBRUARY 14, 1989—154 years to the day after Pelham Humphries received his land grant—Brown Perego filed a class action lawsuit in Federal Court against Amoco Production Company, Mobil Oil Corporation, Phillips Petroleum Company, Texaco, Inc., and A.E. Development Corporation, successor to Texas Gulf, Inc. The suit states that "it is believed the amount due Plaintiffs to be in excess of the sum of Two Hundred Billion Dollars."

As for Decker's group, Perego says that if they want to be a part of this suit, they'll have to intervene—and document their relationships to Pelham Humphries. But whatever happens on that score, Perego says his fight isn't with his kin, but with the oil companies. He claims they're now running scared.

Not everyone, however, believes in the Gospel of Pelham. For example, Lena Perego's own sister still thinks it's a foolish dream. "Do you actually believe in it?" she asked Lena. "I can't believe you've worked this hard for Pelham Humphries. You're a fool."

Perego dismisses the doubters as the fools. "Two years ago 90 percent of the people were tired of hearing about it," he says. "Now 99 percent of them believe in me."

The fight, he says, isn't for himself. It's for Uncle Pel. And in truth, what seems to drive Brown Perego isn't the money, but the chance to finally get the definitive court case on Uncle Pel and his fortune. The money is, of course, a factor; but this lawsuit seems to loom as the final exorcism of the ghost that has haunted the family since the crude rained down on a Texas plain. Perego

works on the case 12 hours a day.

"The telephone really wears me down," he says. "Sometimes I get ready to fall over. I take a nitroglycerin pill and lay down for a while on the couch in the office."

Bob Carr, who has lived with the tale since he listened to Reverend Glover's exhortations as a child, is also exhausted—not by his work with the organization, but by the specter of Uncle Pel, who won't leave him or his family alone. "My objective is to bring it to a conclusion," Carr says. "Who was Pelham? Did he ever exist? Are we the heirs? I have mixed feelings to see the dream end. It's been a curse. I've heard it so many times, it's nauseating."

In the end, the riches would go to Carr's and Perego's heirs, who, of course, are the heirs of the Tennessee farmboy who bled to death on the floor of an east Texas bar. "I've never had a lot of money, and I probably wouldn't live to spend it," says Perego with a shake of his head. "But I would like to leave something for my children or grandchildren."

If the family wins, what he will leave his children is millions of dollars. If he loses, however, will Uncle Pel finally be buried?

The answer to that is perhaps embodied in Brown Perego's 3-year-old grandson, Timothy. Every night before he goes to bed, he asks to listen to his favorite record. With a blanket on his feet and a cup of cocoa in his hand, he hums along as the Railway Express sings: "Bring that big oil down boys, bring that oil down." Chances are, Timothy drifts off to sleep each night thinking of how he'd spend Uncle Pel's fortune: For him it may be a new toy; for his grandfather a new car; for the old-timers a gas stove to replace the old wood-burning one.

It's the same dream that generations of Humphries have dreamed—it begins, perhaps, with foggy images of a knife fight, a flight west, and a thundering boom that ripped the ground and changed a Tennessee family forever. Then deep into the night, when sleep is sweetest, the dream gets brighter and the image crystal clear: There's Uncle Pel, standing tall and laughing like a madman as he rains riches down on you the way Spindletop rained oil. And then you get to spend the money. Come morning, you wonder if maybe it wasn't just a dream at all. □

## The Humphreys Family From Tennessee to Texas

By Linda Stewart Reed and John Humphreys

Henry *Humfrey* (later was spelled as Humphreys) left Tyrone, Ireland in the early 1700's and crossed the ocean to settle in Prince George County, Maryland. Although his wife's name is unknown, his son was also named Henry and he married Sarah Talbott. They, in turn, had a son named Henry who married Elizabeth Burch and they decided to move further south and settled in Caswell County, North Carolina. Their son, William "Henley", married Winney Grant and they moved in a western direction and settled near a small village called Puryear in Henry County, Tennessee.

William "Henley" and Winney had seven sons, several of whom moved to other states. Alfred and Horatio moved to Illinois, Henley (Jr), who married Sarah Ann Coats, became an early pioneer in Texas, while Thomas, Henry A., Asa, and Abner stayed in Tennessee.

So our story begins.

William Henley's son, Henry A. Humphreys, married Susannah Paschall. Their son, Wesley Morgan Humphreys, was born in Henry County, Tennessee on April 1, 1842. (Although his name was Wesley, he was also known as W. M., Wes, Westord, Westward, Western, or William.) His brothers and sisters were Pernelia Ann, Winnie, James, Henry, John, Louisiana, and Mollie.

Along with his brother, Henry Anderson Humphreys, Wes served in the Civil War in Company "G", Seventh Regiment, Tennessee Cavalry, also known as Duckworth's Tennessee Cavalry. The Regiment was formed in April 1862. Its companies were from the counties of Shelby, Henry, Haywood, Fayette, Tipton, Hardeman, and Weakley in Tennessee.

They fought in Mississippi, moved with Forrest to West Tennessee and Kentucky, then saw action in East Tennessee. The regiment participated in the Battles of Franklin and Nashville, and in 1865 skirmished in Alabama. Henry and Wes, now a lieutenant, mustered out at the end of the War in about May 1865 in Gainesville, Alabama. They both returned to Henry County, hundreds of miles by foot, depending on the help of strangers for food and shelter.



Wes headed to Texas where he settled near what was to become Mesquite. Some of the Paschall, Coats, and Chapman families from Henry County, Tennessee had already moved to Dallas County. On January 29, 1867, Wes married Sarah Elizabeth Chapman, born August 27, 1849, who had moved to Dallas County in 1858 with her parents, Davis Greene and Nancy Coats Chapman. Wes and Sarah settled on a farm near Lawson, about seven miles southeast of Mesquite.

## Editor's Page

Recently I received an e-mail from Linda Reed of Henry County, Tennessee inquiring about a history book of Mesquite. She said she had been looking for one for some time with no results. I told her about *The Stake In The Prairie* and what the book contained on the Humphreys, who were the people she was researching.

Since my ancestors did not come from the Mesquite area, I had never had an occasion to research in *The Stake In The Prairie* and didn't know the true value of this book myself. So, I want to take this opportunity to share what I have learned and acquaint you further with the publications that can be purchased from MHGS. See list of publications and order blank on page 28.

*The Stake In The Prairie*, now in its second printing, is a history of the Mesquite area and the many prominent Mesquite citizens who helped make Mesquite what it is today, a growing and thriving community on the edge of Dallas, Texas.

*The Mesquite Cemetery Survey* is a survey of burials up to 1995. "The information in this book was not only compiled from the many trips to the cemetery but also from four other sources. A master plat of the cemetery, a record book from the McCullough Funeral Home which gave information of some unmarked and early graves that the stones no longer are standing, a partial reading of the cemetery back in the late 1960's by the Mesquite Genealogical Society, this early reading has some of the unmarked graves with the information coming from the relatives of the people that are buried there in unmarked plots. The fourth source consists of burials from 1988 thru part of 1993 from information given by Curtis Lloyd and The Mesquite News Obituaries from Jan. 7, 1993 thru Dec. 29, 1994, these listings are in the Addendum."

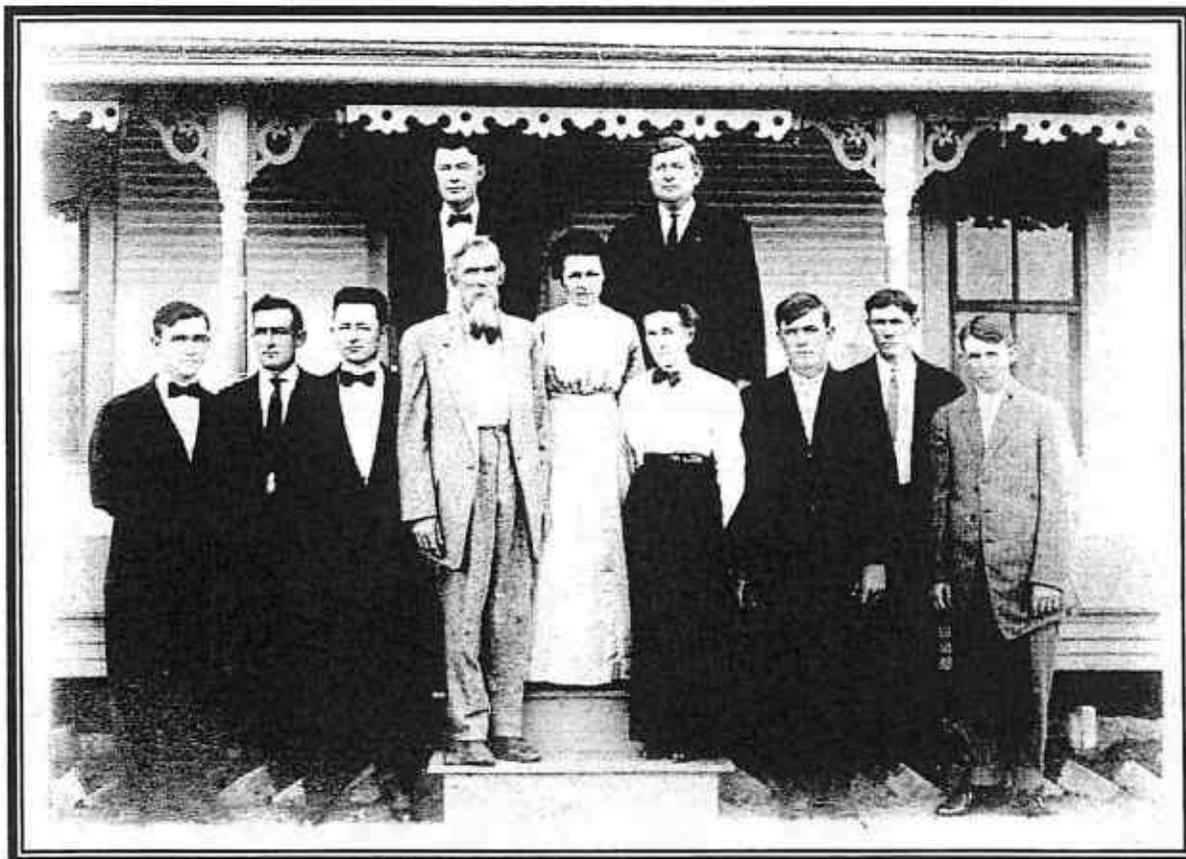
*The Mesquite Cemetery Survey Supplement* is not only an update of the additional burials from 1995 through August 15, 2002 but also lists corrections made to *The Mesquite Cemetery Survey*. It also contains all of the papers that were filed for the designation of a Texas Historical Cemetery and the dedication ceremony that took place April 11, 2002. *The Mesquite Cemetery Survey Supplement* was published in the September 2002 Quarterly but can also be purchased by itself and that version is printed in color. If you need a picture of a stone in the Mesquite Cemetery, let me know and I will be glad to send it to you.

There are four volumes of the *Birth, Marriages and Death Index* from the Texas Mesquiter: (1910 to 1919), (1920 to 1929), (1930 to 1949) and (1950 to 1959).

As I corresponded with Linda Reed, I became more and more interested in the Humphreys family and discovered how invaluable these resources are. I used all of these books to find out an abundance of information on this prominent family. And of course, our own Marjorie Bays, who is a real live walking, talking history book herself and who has been a leader in compiling information for some of these publications, added what she knew about the Humphreys.

I wish to thank Linda Reed and John Humphreys for sharing their research with us. It's been a learning experience for me, and their article is a fine addition to the history of Mesquite.

Wes and Sarah had eleven children. There were eight sons: Henry Davis, known as H. D., (married Alice Parker), James C. (married Emma Miller), Forest Morgan (married Zula Landess), Luther Lester (married Ollie Miller), John Ollie (married Aileen Hitchens), Robert Porter (married Jean Addie), Clover C. (married Eula Brown), and Murray L. (married Venie Burns). They had three daughters: Britanie and Susan Ada (who died very young) and Carrie Maud (married G. Ernest McKenzie).



According to the book, "A Stake in the Prairie", the family became very prominent in Dallas County. In 1890, Wes and his son H. D. founded "Humphreys and Son Hardware" store that later became Humphreys and Vanston, the largest hardware store in the area. They sold everything from farm equipment to caskets.



*Henry D. Humphreys*

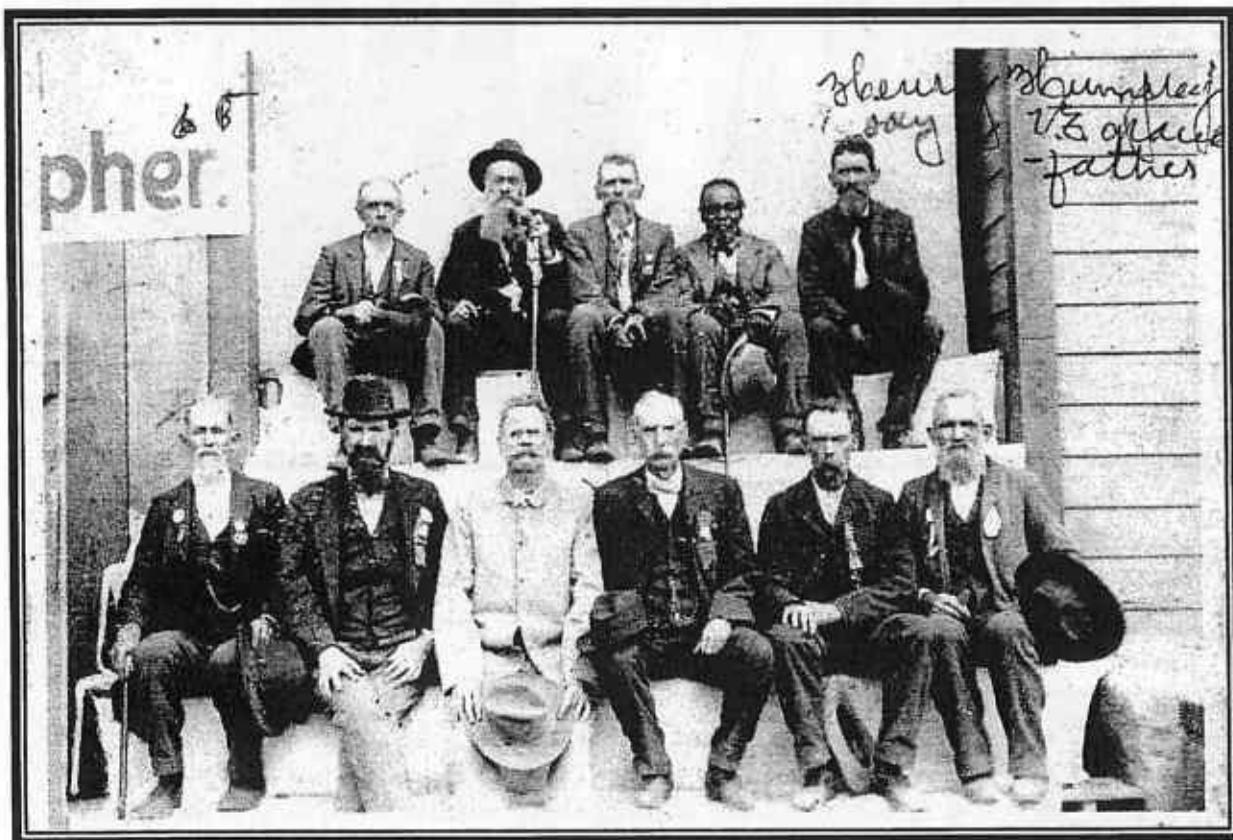
Their son, H. D. was also a town leader. In 1901 he was elected a trustee of the Mesquite Independent School District where he served through 1923. On May 6, 1903, when an election was held to incorporate Mesquite under new boundaries, H. D. was the presiding officer. He served on the City Council from 1907-08 and from 1913-16. After selling his hardware store in 1919, he spent the next 12 years in the County Clerk's office. In 1916, he was on the Building Committee for the new building of the First United Methodist Church.

Wes and Sarah lived the remainder of their lives in Mesquite, enjoying their large family which, at that time, included 27 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren. Wes' uncle, Horatio Humphreys moved to Dallas County, and another uncle, Henley Humphreys who married Sarah Ann Coats, also lived in the Mesquite area along with Wes' sister, Louisiana who married William Haywood Paschall. So although they had their roots in Henry County, Tennessee, they were surrounded by many relatives in Mesquite.

Sarah died on April 4, 1927 and Wes followed her nine months later on January 31, 1928 with his funeral held at the Primitive Baptist Church. Both are buried in the Mesquite Cemetery under a double headstone. In Wes' obituary, it states that he was "a man who was genial by nature, honest in his dealings, and during his long residence of 66 years in and near Mesquite made many friends."

Many of the descendants of the Humphreys family remain in Dallas County today.

So the story continues....



1902 Confederate Reunion  
Duckworth's and other Henry County Veterans  
Convention held in Dallas, Texas

Top Row: Washington Penbroke Bumpas(s), unknown, Wesley Morgan Humphreys, Dan Humphreys, Henry Anderson Humphreys  
Bottom Row: William Haywood Paschall, unknown, Tobias Lafayette Paschall in the confederate uniform, unknown, David Dickenson Brisendine, unknown

Additional information on people in the 1902 Confederate Reunion photograph:

**William Haywood Paschall**

Son of William C. Paschall and Margaret Sawyers  
Born October 1844 in White County, Tennessee  
Married November 8, 1866 in Henry County, Tennessee to Louisiana Humphreys  
Died in 1913 in Kaufman County, Texas

**Tobias Lafayette Paschall**

Son of William C. Paschall and Margaret Sawyers  
Born April 19, 1839 in White County, Tennessee  
Married December 16, 1866 to Virginia Catherine Morris in Kaufman County, Texas, second marriage to Amanda Thompson  
Died November 13, 1907 in Kaufman County, Texas

**Dan Humphreys**

He was an aide and a cook to Henry A. Humphreys during the Civil War.  
Dan is buried in Mill Creek Church Cemetery in Henry County, Tennessee.  
He was in Mesquite and Dublin where he had land and was speculating on property values. He is written about in a book called "Colored Cooks in the Civil War" - in the archives in Nashville, Tennessee.

**Wesley Morgan Humphreys**

son of Henry A. and Susannah Paschall Humphreys  
Born April 1, 1842  
Married Sarah Elizabeth Chapman on January 29, 1868 in Texas  
Children: Henry D., James C., Forest Morgan, Luther Lester, John Ollie, Robert Porter, Clover C., Murray L., Britanie, Susan Ada, and Carrie Maud.  
Died January 31, 1928 in Mesquite, Texas

**Henry A. Humphreys**

son of Henry A. and Susannah Paschall Humphreys  
Born January 27, 1839  
Married Malinda Isabella Walker Dumas on January 29, 1868 in Henry County, Tennessee  
Children: Maud, Flora, Jennie, James, Lillie, Fisher, and Horace  
Died 1924 in Henry County, Tennessee

**David Dickenson Brisendine**

son of William D. and Julia Dickenson Brisendine  
Born October 10, 1836 in Henry County  
Married Isadora Wade  
Children: 5 children (Frank James Brisendine was one)  
Died March 27, 1913 in Henry County, Tennessee

ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA  
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

**Washington Penbroke Bumpas(s)**

son of Green Lee Bumpas(s) and Margaret Julia Carson

Born April 24, 1844 in Henry County, TN

Died August 20, 1913

This article was written and submitted by:

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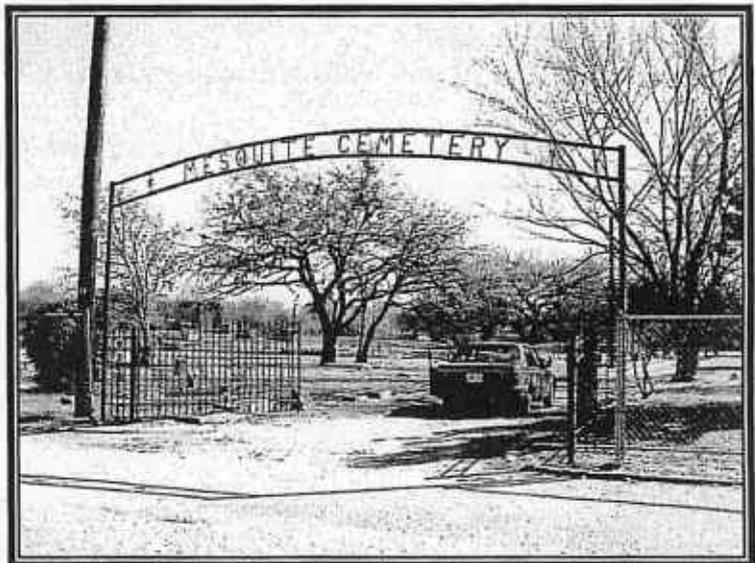
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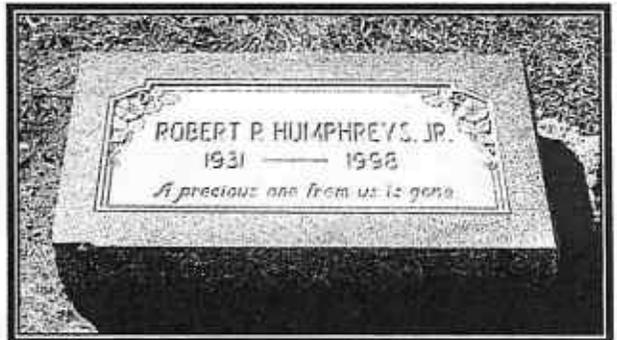
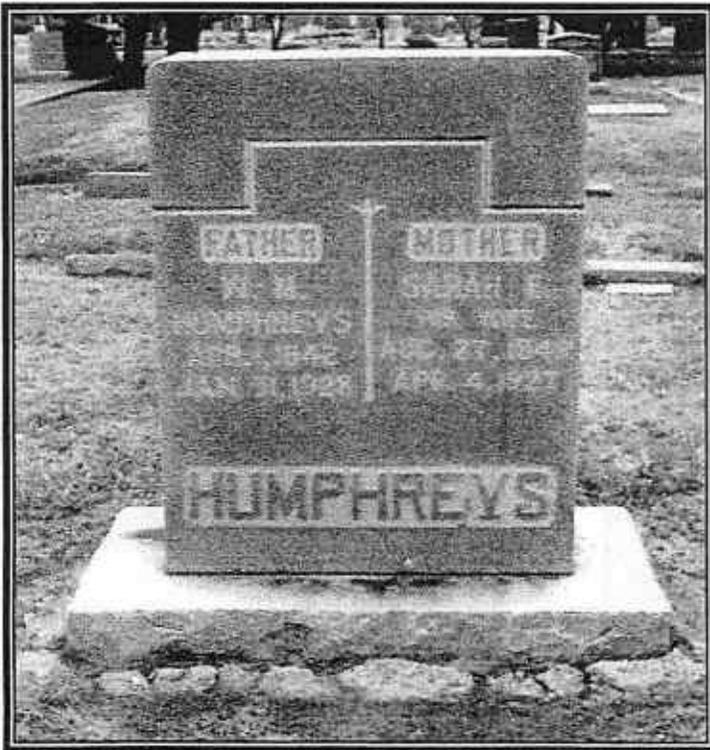
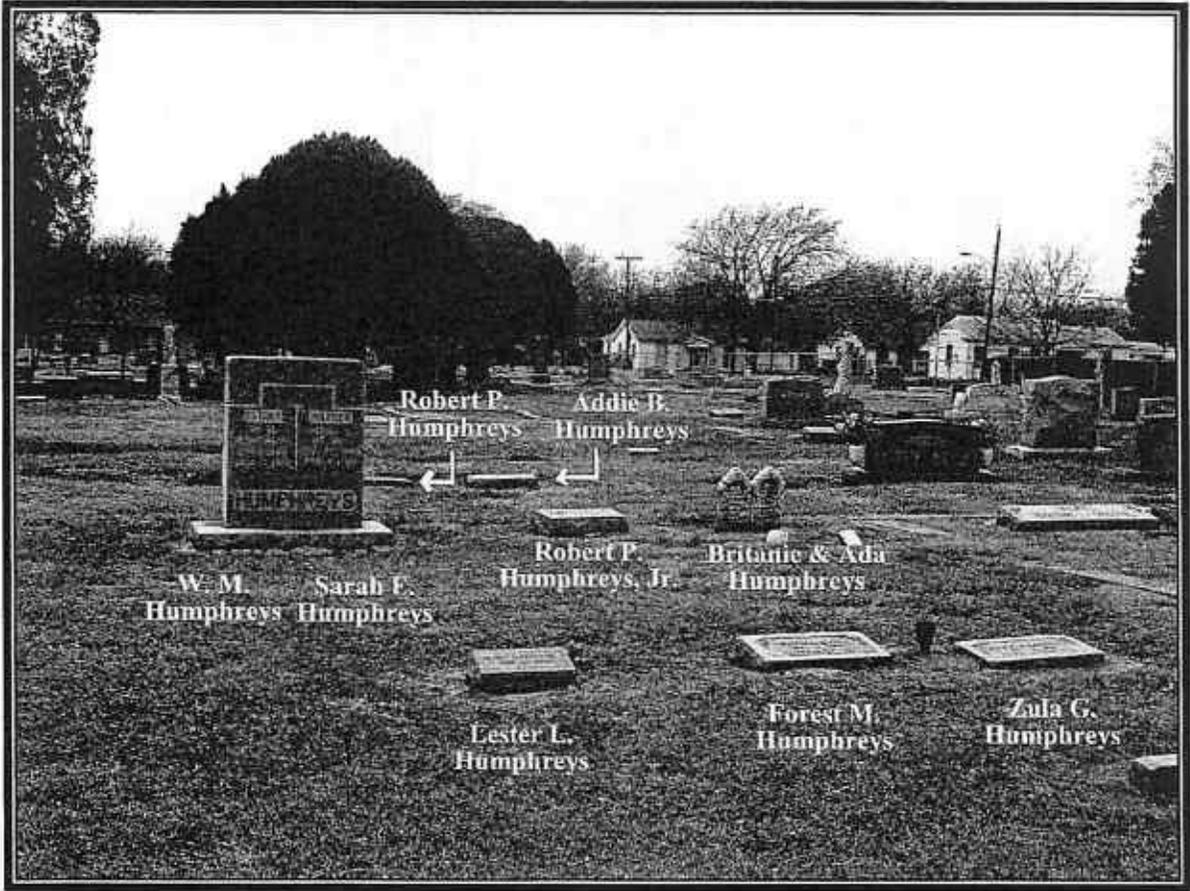
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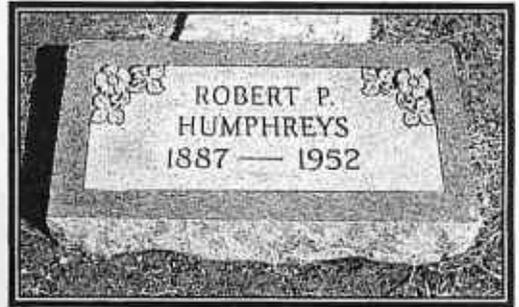
The following pages, submitted by Marjorie Bays and Doris Curry, are companion articles to The Humphreys Family: From Tennessee to Texas.



**The Historical Marker and the main gate of Mesquite Cemetery**



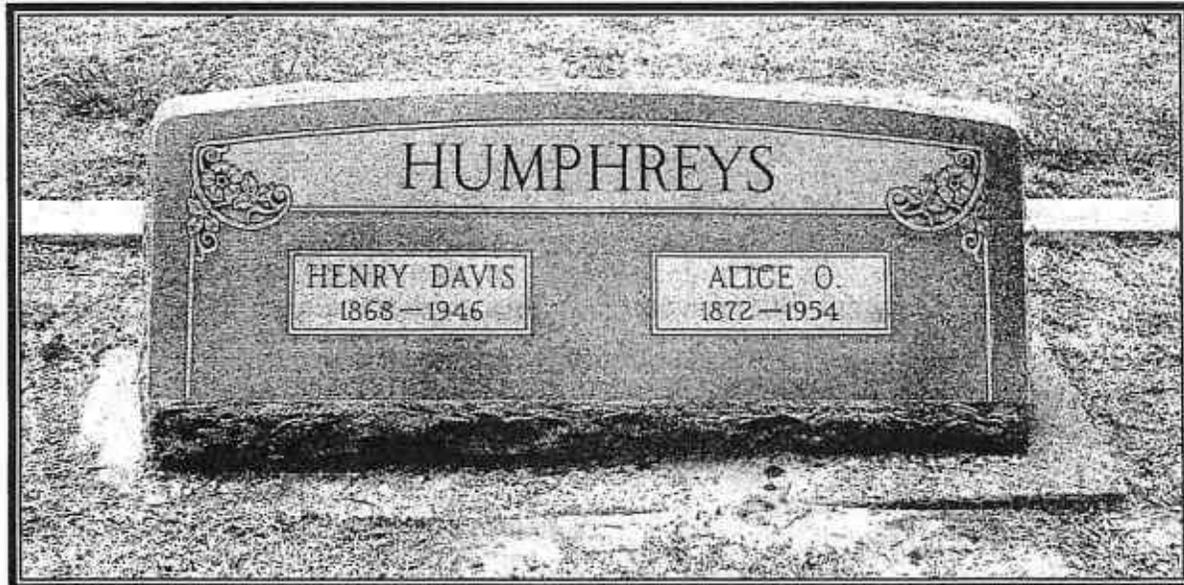






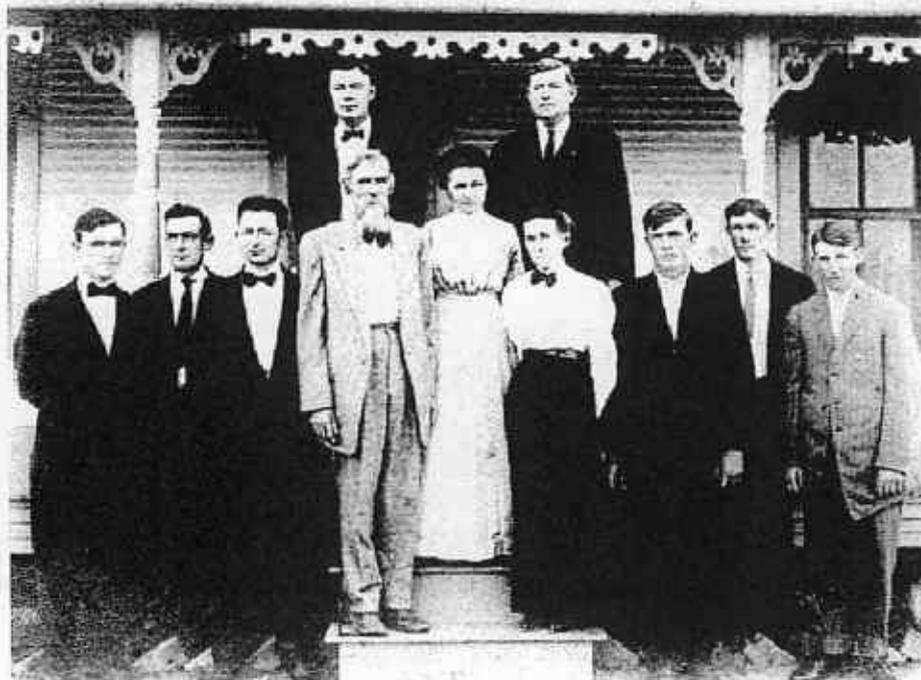
Henry Davis Humphreys      Alice O. Humphreys

Luther B.  
Son of  
H. D. & Alice  
Humphreys  
Born  
May 23, 1893  
Died  
Feb. 9  
1899



The following article appeared in The Dallas Times Herald, April 1923 and was submitted to Marjorie Bays by Fay Flatt, who is a Humphreys descendant.

## County Pioneer and Confederate Veteran Celebrates 81st Birthday



W. M. Humphreys, one of the few Confederate veterans now alive who served under General Bedford Forest in the Civil War, and a resident of Dallas county for 57 years, celebrated his eighty-first birthday at his home in Mesquite Sunday.

Nine children, 24 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren were present.

"Father" Humphreys, as he is known, is still hale and hearty despite his age, and, although retired from active farming, he still takes a personal interest in his farm, near Lawson.

He was born in Henry county, Tenn., and during his four years service for the Confederacy was wounded three times in action.

In the photograph Mr. Humphreys is shown standing on the porch-steps of his home, at his left is his wife, and in the center is his only daughter, the eight other children, all boys, are grouped around the aged couple.

The children present at his birthday party Sunday were H. D. R. P., and C. C. Humphreys of Mesquite; J. C. L., L., J. O. and M. L. Humphreys of Dallas; and F. M. Humphreys and Mrs. G. E. McKenzie of Lawson.

# The Texas Mesquiter

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1928

## W. M. Humphreys Died Tuesday Night

A pall of sadness was cast over this community Tuesday night, when it became known that W. M. Humphreys, familiarly known as "Uncle Wes," had answered the final "summons," death occurring at his home in Mesquite at 9:30 o'clock Tuesday night, Jan. 31.

Wesley Morgan Humphreys was born in Henry County, Tenn., on April 1, 1842, and would therefore have been eighty six years of age had he lived two months longer.

He came to Texas in 1866 and on Jan. 27 of the following year he married Miss Sarah Chapman. Mrs. Humphreys died on April 3 of last year.

They settled on a farm near Lawson about seven miles southeast of Mesquite, where they reared a large family of children. Mr. Humphreys was actively engaged in farming for many years and was also a pioneer business man of Mesquite. An early hardware business here was conducted under the name of W. M. Humphreys & Son. The son in the business was H. D. Humphreys. Later Ed F. Vanston bought the interest of W. M. Humphreys in the business and the firm was thereafter known as Humphreys & Vanston.

A number of years ago, Mr. Humphreys retired from farming. He purchased a home in Mesquite and has since made this his home. At the time of his death however, he still owned the farm at Lawson.

Mr. Humphreys was a member of the Primitive Baptist church. He took a great interest in the affairs of the church and was faithful in his attendance at all services.

He served as a Confederate soldier throughout the Civil War and for many years he attended the Annual Confederate Veterans reunions in various parts of the country.

Mr. Humphreys was a man who was genial by nature, honest in his dealings and

during his long residence of sixty six years in and near Mesquite made many friends.

He is survived by nine children, as follows:

H. D., J. C., L. L., J. O. and M. L. Humphreys, all of Dallas. Mrs. G. E. McKenzie and F. M. Humphreys of Lawson and R. P. and C. C. Humphreys of Mesquite.

He is also survived by twenty seven grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Funeral services were conducted at the Mesquite Baptist church, Wednesday afternoon at 3:00 o'clock, by Rev. W. H. Wynn of Dallas, an old friend of the family. Rev. Bounds of Dallas led in prayer and J. C. Rugel, another friend of long-standing of the deceased make an appropriate talk.

There were a large number of beautiful floral offerings and the services were largely attended. Interment took place at the Mesquite cemetery.

Among those from Dallas who attended, the following were noted.

Jno. H. Cullom, R. A. Vineyard, Balie Finks, W. L. Robertson, Grady Nunn, Mr. and Mrs. L. L. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. L. G. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Johns, Mrs. E. B. Dillen, Mrs. Lamberth, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Cullom, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Smith, R. B. Allen, E. R. Tennant, Joe Agee, Mr. and Mrs. Wilber Starks, Mr. and Mrs. A. Rockhold, J. V. Thompson, Walter Gross, Mr. and Mrs. R. G. Chapman, Mrs. J. T. Lynch, Mrs. Alice Thompson, Mrs. Gus Payne, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Keedy, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Wolff, Mr. and Mrs. Thos. Gentry, D. C. Whiteley, R. C. Jett, Leroy Paschall, Harry Warnick, Mrs. Frank Ritter, Chas. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Porter, Mrs. D. C. Landess, Mrs. E. L. Prewitt, Lee Bennett, Walter Bennet, Roy Green, W. B. Miller, W. W. Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. W. M. Miller of Forney.

OCCGS REFERENCE ONLY

# The Texas Mesquiter

FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 1946

## Death Claims Henry D. Humphreys Prominent Mesquite Citizen, Friday



Dallas News

Funeral services for H. D. Humphreys, 77, who died Friday midnight at his home in Mesquite, were held Saturday, 2:30 p.m. at the First Methodist Church. The Rev. C. D. King, Jr. and the Rev. Bill Morgan Smith, Plano, officiated. Burial was in Mesquite Cemetery with nephews as pallbearers.

Mr. Humphreys was born August 10, 1868 on the old Humphreys farm, south of Mesquite, the son of Wes and Sarah Humphreys, natives of Henry County, Tennessee, who came to Mesquite in 1866. He attended Farmers school at Lawson and business school in Fort Worth. He married Miss Alice Parker September 25, 1890 and the couple celebrated their golden wedding anniversary with open house in 1940. He engaged in farming until he entered the hardware business with his father, who later sold his interest to Ed. Vanston. The firm of Humphreys and Vanston became one

of the biggest businesses of its kind in Dallas County and drew customers from miles around. It was said that a man never went out of the store without buying something. Humphreys and Vanston was sold in 1919 and Mr. Humphreys spent the next twelve years in the County Clerk's office. He retired in 1931.

Mr. Humphreys suffered a stroke in 1932 and on September 6, 1942 fell and broke his hip. He had been invallded since.

He was a member of the First Methodist Church, Mesquite for 52 years, and served as Superintendent of the Sunday School 28 years, while serving in other official capacities. He was on the school board for many years, and his lodge affiliations included Masons, Woodmen and Knights of Pythias.

Survivors are his wife; two sons, Felton M. Humphreys, Mesquite; Osell Humphreys, Dallas; four daughters, Mrs. Clarence Hart, Mesquite; Mrs. Edward Wolfe, Mrs. T. R. Gentry and Miss Marie Humphreys, Dallas; 7 grandchildren; a sister, Mrs. Ernest McKenzie; six brothers, Jim, Ollie, Murray and Lester, Dallas; C. C. and Bob Humphreys, Mesquite.

ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA  
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Tell her if  
to join CS of  
wants to correspond  
with Humphrey ancestors

Humphrey  
Book!

Normal, Illinois 61761  
January 22, 1978

Dear Ms. Snapp,

In looking through some old Ohio Genealogical Society Newsletters in our Bloomington-Normal genealogical library, I ran across your query in 1972 that mentioned David Humphrey and wife Lucy (Marshall) of Connecticut who settled in Braceville, Trumbull Co., Ohio.

I am writing to you at this point because I am seeking information on Mary Humphrey and her parents, also of Trumbull County, Ohio-----and wonder if my Mary might be related to your David Humphrey.

A Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, in a section on Farmington Twp., Trumbull Co., says: "Mary Humphrey was the wife of Daniel Taft. She came to Youngstown, Ohio, with her people in 1800. Her sister Keziah taught the first school in Youngstown.....the old State Road Hotel in stage coach days ....was the stopping place between Painesville and Warren. The first landlady was Mrs. Daniel Taft....."

Mary Humphrey Taft was born about 1785 (place unknown), and died Aug. 19, 1852 at Renoldsburg, Franklin Co., Ohio. So she must have been about fifteen when the family moved to Ohio. I have no idea where they came from. Her husband, Daniel Taft, was born in Massachusetts (New Marlboro, Berkshire Co.) May 24, 1783, and died at Renoldsburg (or Reynoldsburg). He lived, in between his birth and death, in Sheffield, Mass.; Taftsbury, Trumbull Co., Ohio (along the State Road); and possibly other places as well. It is not known where their oldest daughter, Mary Ann Taft, was born--although the 1850 federal census for Bond Co., Illinois lists her birthplace as Vermont!

This is all that I know about Mary Humphrey Taft. If you can shed any light on her parents or on her, I would certainly appreciate it.

My descent from Mary Humphrey Taft is in this manner:

- Mary Humphrey Taft (1785, ? - 1852, Franklin Co., Ohio)
  - Mary Ann Taft Hawley (11 Jan. 1807, Vt.? - 16 Aug. 1865, Bond Co., Ill.)
  - Celia Ann Hawley Wright (18 Dec. 1827, Trumbull Co., Ohio-17 Apr., 1886, Bond Co., Ill.)
  - Rosabelle Wright Smith (15 Mar. 1879, Bond Co., Ill.-13 July 1927, Bond Co., Ill.)
  - Muriel Smith Dickey (27 Feb. 1897, Bond Co., Ill. - )
  - Joybelle Dickey Craig (30 Jan. 1922, Wayne Co., Ill. - )
- (Mary Ann Taft married in Trumbull Co., Ohio, to Milton Hawley?)

Taft -  
Hawley  
Smith  
Dickey

B-1785  
Mary Humphrey  
Daniel Taft  
to Youngstown  
Ohio 1800  
Sister  
Keziah  
Humphrey  
died  
Mary Ann  
Taft  
Hawley  
Trumbull Co.  
Ohio

Probate Record

<sup>Our</sup> David Humphrey <sup>Our g. gr. grandfather -</sup> <sup>Rich. Betsy mentioned here</sup> <sup>was over</sup> <sup>gr. grandmother</sup> <sup>in mother of our</sup> <sup>Living</sup> <sup>Brother</sup> <sup>Esq.</sup> Will

In the name of God Amen, I David Humphrey of Brucerville in the County of Trumbull and state of Ohio being weak in body but of sound and perfect mind and memory do make and publish this as my last will and testament in a manner and form following (that is to say) first I Will that all my debts shall be paid and also the expence of my last sickness I give and bequeath unto my eldest daughter Habetiah the sum of one dollar and a half and no more. I do also give and bequeath unto my younger daughter <sup>Betsy</sup> <sup>the sum of</sup> <sup>one hundred and twenty five</sup> dollars (including a note of hand which she holds against me) and no more. And lastly I do also give and bequeath unto my son Frederick all the rest residue and remainder of my real and personal estate goods and chattels of what kind and nature soever and further. Thereby appoint my son Frederick sole executor of this my last will and testament.

In witness whereof I hereunto set my hand and seal this twentyfourth day of June in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and thirty one

David Humphrey

Signed, read and published and declared by the abovesaid David Humphrey to be his last Will testament in the presence of us who have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses in presence of the Judge

William Griswold  
Joshua Bradford  
William Benedict

Proved and approved October 13<sup>th</sup> 1831  
and recorded by me

George Parsons Clerk



# Generations-old folk: tale of lost Texas oil riches still draws claimants

By Bruce Henderson  
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

LENOIR, N.C. — Young Pelham Humphries, born out of wedlock in Caldwell County, N.C., stabbed a man in Tennessee, slipped off to Old Mexico and in 1835 expired during a Nacogdoches barroom brawl. Before he died, Humphries obtained a 3,900-acre land grant in present-day Beaumont, Texas. When the Spindletop oil gusher blew there in 1901, Texaco and Gulf Oil were born.

Now Humphries' descendants, including some 500 from Caldwell and Watauga counties, N.C., want

a piece of the action. They figure that up to \$100 billion in royalty payments and interest — equal to about half last year's federal budget deficit — is stashed in hidden escrow accounts by oil companies.

"I think they really think it's there," said Robert "Buck" Greer of Lenoir, who believes he is related to Humphries on his mother's side. "I really think it's there. This is not no fantasy we dreamed up."

The money, which Texas and oil company officials say doesn't exist, has lured many since the oil first gushed. And through the years the story of Humphries and his lost Texas oil fortune has be-

come a durable fable of riches and duplicity, family intrigue and dreams waiting to come true.

A thousand people who formed a group in Tennessee last March also claim to be Humphries' kin. An Ohio group seeking up to \$20 billion filed a federal suit against five oil companies last month.

The lawsuits and claims appear periodically, Beaumont Heritage Society members say. None have been known to pay off.

Humphries's kin claim the deed was misappropriated after his death. Descendants of another man, James Medders, claim one-eighth the mineral rights to the

property. Five descendants from Cincinnati sued to recover that portion in May.

"We get two or three calls a week," said Jefferson County Clerk R.L. Barnes of Beaumont. "I got a form letter on Pelham Humphries and another letter on Medders" to expedite answers.

"I just don't think we're fighting a losing battle," said Greer, waving a folder of documents. "But I might not see it in my lifetime."

The clan is encouraged by a 1948 federal court ruling in Texas that they say designated them tenants in common with the oil companies on the oil fields. A technicality,

Greer said, prevented a settlement in that case.

The battle goes on across the Tennessee line. The story line has persisted in generations of families in both states.

"I've always been involved with it, since I was 10 years old," said Brown Peregoy of Gray County, Tenn., near the locale where folklore says Humphries grew up. "My uncle was a preacher, and I remember sitting and talking after Sunday school about what we'd do with all those millions."

The 1,000-member Pelham Humphries Association, which Peregoy heads, requires \$25 an-

nual dues. Peregoy, a retired construction supervisor, says his group's claim looks encouraging.

For the record, Gulf Corp., which had 1983 revenues of \$28.8 billion, denies placing any money in an escrow account for Pelham Humphries heirs.

"The pitiful part," said county clerk Barnes, who has listened to the stories for 60 years, "is they think that if they can just prove they're a descendant, they've got it made. But being a descendant won't do no good, 'cause the fortune's lost. But I'll tell you one thing: They got a batch of heirs. A batch of 'em."