

The Bible of Willie Simon & Dora Bumstead Wiess

(by Tom Cloud, great grandson, 2005)

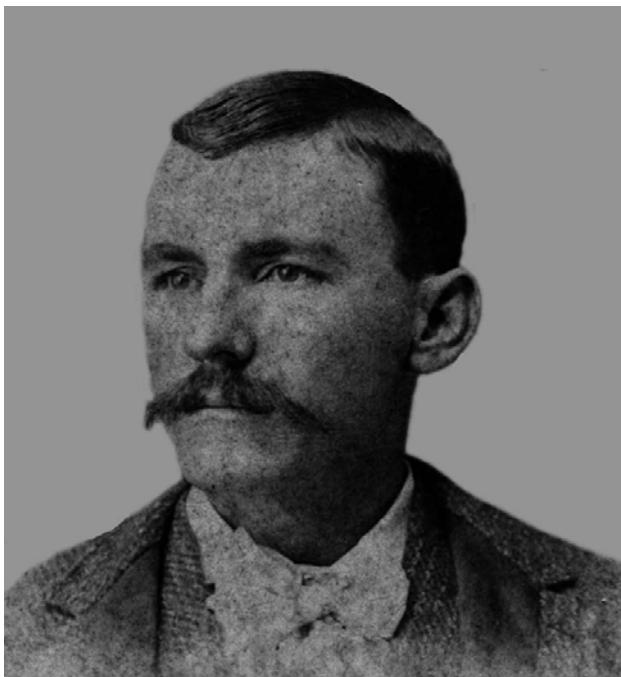
Dora Bumstead (1871-1951)

Dora Bumstead was the youngest of ten children. She was born February 10, 1871 near a town called Sharon (formerly known as "Buzzard's Roost"), about 14 miles North of Beaumont in the beautiful piney woods of East Texas. Her father was Mourad Bumstead. He was a surveyor from New York who came to help fight for Texas' independence from Mexico. Because of his service, including the Siege of Bexar in December of 1835, the new Republic of Texas granted him land in East Texas. He married Dora's mother, Jane Cravey in 1848. Mourad was sixty years old when Dora was born, and she was only sixteen when he died.

Dora married Willie Simon Wiess in 1891. He was a widower, his wife having died two years before, and she became the stepmother of his two children, aged nine and eight.



Dora Bumstead Wiess.
Picture taken about 1937



Willie Simon Wiess
(1862-1893)

Willie Simon Wiess (1862-1893)

Willie Simon Wiess had been married nine years when his wife, May Melissa Sims, died. They had three children -- Amy was 7, Bud was 6 and Thomas was 1. Willie was no stranger to being a single parent. His father, Napoleon Bonaparte Wiess, had died of pneumonia when he was only 10 and his mother never remarried. He was the eldest and likely had borne much of the burden of helping with his five siblings.

Mary was only twenty-seven when she died in March of 1889 in Beaumont. Three months later, the little family lost their youngest member in death, 15 month old Thomas Wiess.

Willie Wiess and Dora Bumstead both had been born and raised on the homesteads of their parents. Willie's grandfather was Simon Wiess, and the store and boat landing built by Simon was on the East bank of the Neches river and was called Wiess' Bluff. Dora's father, Mourad Bumstead, lived on the other side of the Neches, about five miles West of Wiess' Bluff. They lived on the edge of the Big Thicket, a massive pine forest in East Texas. At the time of their marriage, the lumber business was one of the principle industries there. Two of Willie's uncles had become wealthy in that business, owning the Reliance Lumber Mill, the largest of its kind in the world. Willie's brother-in-law, George Washington Hooks, owned the Hooks Lumber Company near where Dora lived, and Willie had gone to work there. Sharon, where Dora lived, had been renamed Hooks' Switch in 1888.

Two years after Mary's death, Dora caught the fancy of Willie Wiess and, four days before Christmas in 1891, they married. This beautiful family Bible, with its deeply embossed leather cover and marvelous illustrations from hand-engraved plates, was very likely a wedding present or Christmas gift to the newlyweds.

Willie and his children Amy and Bud had endured so much hardship and grief over the last two years. This marriage was a new beginning, and this was not the usual family Bible. It was larger than most and more expensive too. It had commentaries by two of the most respected Christian scholars of the time, Rev. Robert Jamieson of Scotland, whose writings were recommended by the great preacher of that day, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and also by Rev. Edward Henry Bickersteth. It was intended to be the center of their home decorations and, certainly, of their very lives. No, this was no ordinary family Bible. It was meant to be a very special gift to the family, a symbol of hope and blessing, and the carefully inscribed records of the family indicate they treasured it.

Willie and Dora Wiess were blessed with a baby girl in September of 1892. They named their beautiful little girl Jessie Wiess. The next summer Dora became pregnant with their second child.

Willie recorded all of these events, including the birth and death of his first wife, in his own beautiful handwriting in their family Bible.

But their joy was to turn to grief as the cruel hand of death would claim another of the Wiess line. Like his father before him, Willie Simon Wiess was not to live past young adulthood. Willie was working for his brother-in-law, George Washington Hooks, at his sawmill. George was married to Willie's sister, Maggie, and owned the Hooks Sawmill at Hooks Switch. The Hooks mill had been decommissioned for two months for repairs and was just coming back on line that fateful morning of November 14, 1893. It was chilly and Willie and several other men were warming themselves by the boiler when it blew up, killing four men and scattering wreckage for 150 yards in all directions. Willie would never see his wife or children in this life again, and his youngest son, not yet born, would never touch or be held by or hear the voice of his father. Little Jessie was fourteen months old. Later in life, she had her father's picture enlarged and she carefully and lovingly colored it by hand. That portrait now belongs to her grandson, Thomas Cloud of Austin, Texas.

Amy and Bud had suffered the loss of their mother, their youngest brother and now their father also. Two years after her marriage, at 23 years of age, Dora Bumstead Wiess was left widowed with the responsibility of three children and four months pregnant with another. Amy and Bud,

Willie's children by his first wife, were now 11 and 10 and her daughter Jessie was only 14 months old. Six months later she would give birth to a son that she named Willie Simon Wiess Jr. for his father, her late husband.

The entries in the Bible for the births of Jessie and Willie Simon Wiess II were made by Dora after the death of her husband.

Running a farm and supporting a family isn't easy -- and certainly not for a widow with four young children. Where did Dora turn for help? This was not an age where a woman could find work to support a family. Her mother, Jane Cravey Bumstead, was 64 years old and was also widowed. Dora's brother Henry, who lived next door, helped her as best he could. He only had one arm, but he would come and plow the fields for Dora and help her with the cows. We don't know exactly



Margaret "Aunt Maggie" Wiess Hooks (1869-1960) with her eldest daughter, Lou Sealle Hooks (1888-1975) before her brother Willie Wiess was killed (1893).

how her sister-in-law, Maggie Wiess Hooks and her husband, George Washington Hooks, helped out, but we know they did and they were very close to the family. Everyone called her Aunt Maggie, even her grand niece Gloria Whittington. Years later, in 1942, Gloria would marry Thomas Cloud in El Paso and Aunt Maggie and her son came to the wedding.

Life on the family farm was difficult for Dora and her children, including Bud and Amy. Ten years after his father's death, Bud Wiess, age 19, was killed near Kirbyville while jumping a train -- the third death in a row of the eldest Wiess son at a young age (Napoleon, Willie and Bud). Amy, Willie's oldest child, was taken by another family member to raise, but when that happened or who took her is lost to us now.

The entries in their treasured old Bible and the fading memories of their descendants are but shadows of the past.

There are four pages in the middle of the Bible for records: **Births, Marriages, Deaths** and **Miscellaneous**. The handwriting on the first part of the Births page is elegant and begins with the record of Willie Wiess' first wife, Mary Mellisa Sims. Then his own birth is recorded as "W.S. Wiess", the way a man would record his own name. The handwriting is the same for all the entries through the one for Thomas Edward Wiess, the last child of Willie and Amy, born in 1888. Then the handwriting changes for the entry of the birth of Jessie and Willie Simon Wiess, Dora's children, and is the same for all but the last. The last entry is for her grandchild, Richard Whitfield Whittington, and appears to be in Dora's handwriting.

There are three entries on the **Marriages** page. The first marriage recorded is that of Willie and his second wife, Dora Bumstead. Willie's marriage to Mary Sims isn't recorded there, an indication that the Bible was probably acquired when he married Dora. It is in the same hand that recorded the first entries on the **Births** page. The handwriting changes for the last two marriages -- those of Jessie Wiess and Dalton Earnest Whittington and Willie Simon Wiess and Leona Lewis. But, of course the handwriting is different -- Willie had died more than 25 years before the marriages of his two youngest children.

The first entries on the **Deaths** page are those of the same person who made the first entries on the Births and Marriages pages. Those are the entries for the death of Mary M. Wiess and their youngest son, Thomas Edward Wiess. Then the handwriting changes to that of the second person on the Births page to record the death of Willie Wiess on November 14th, 1893.

The last page is the **Miscellaneous** page. It records the births of Dora's grandchildren and is done in two handwritings. It appears that her daughter, Jessie, wrote all of them but the last, and 62-year-old Dora recorded the birth of her youngest grandchild, Richard Whitfield Whittington, born in 1931.

To get an idea of who is doing the writing, look at the "W"s. The first handwriting makes its "W" with a flourish. The second hand makes its "W" with an almost straight line serif leading into it and out of it. Both of them have the bottom shape of the "W" sharply veed. The third hand makes its "W" with a rounded bottom loop with no flourish or serif.

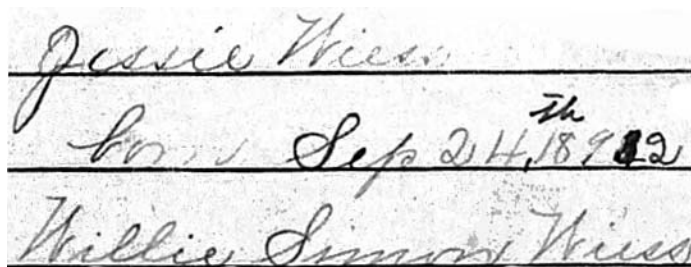


Jessie Wiess (1892-1970)

Willie Wiess

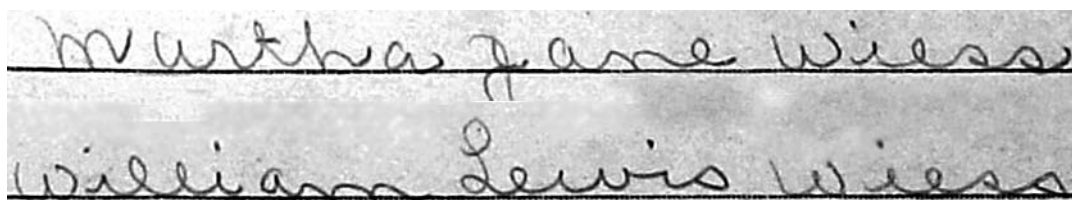
Mary Melissa Sims
born April 8th 1861
Blakely Miller Co Georgia
W. L. Wiess

Dora Wiess



Jessie Wiess
born Sep 24, 1892th
Willie Simon Wiess

Jessie Wiess



Martha Jane Wiess
William Lewis Wiess

My own interpretation of this is that Willie Wiess made the first entries. The lack of a record of his marriage to Mary Mellissa Sims would indicate the Bible came into his possession as either a wedding present when he married Dora or shortly after their marriage.

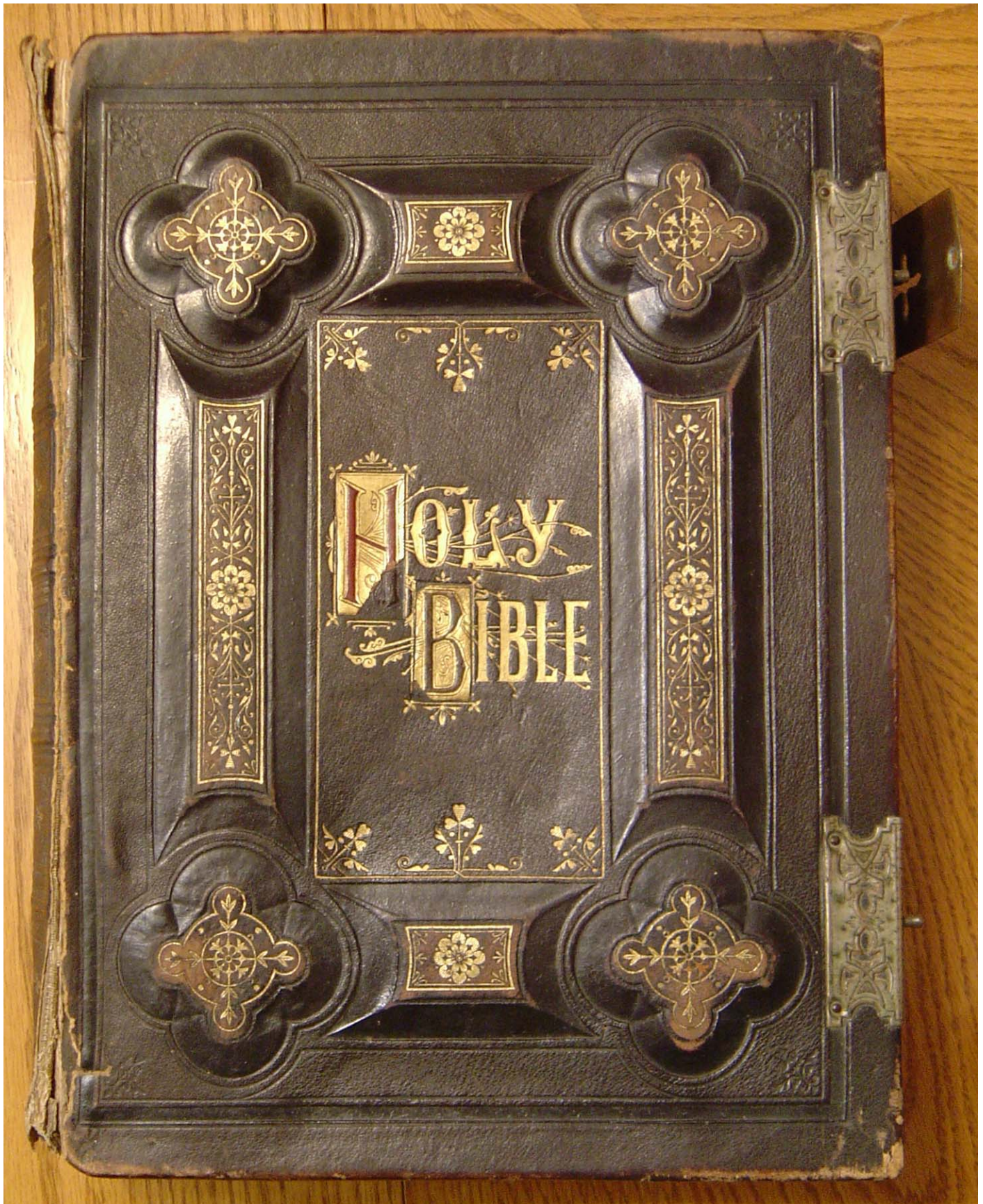
The second set of entries, those with the serif on the "W" I believe are by the hand of Dora Bumstead Wiess. They could not be that of Willie, as he died in 1893.

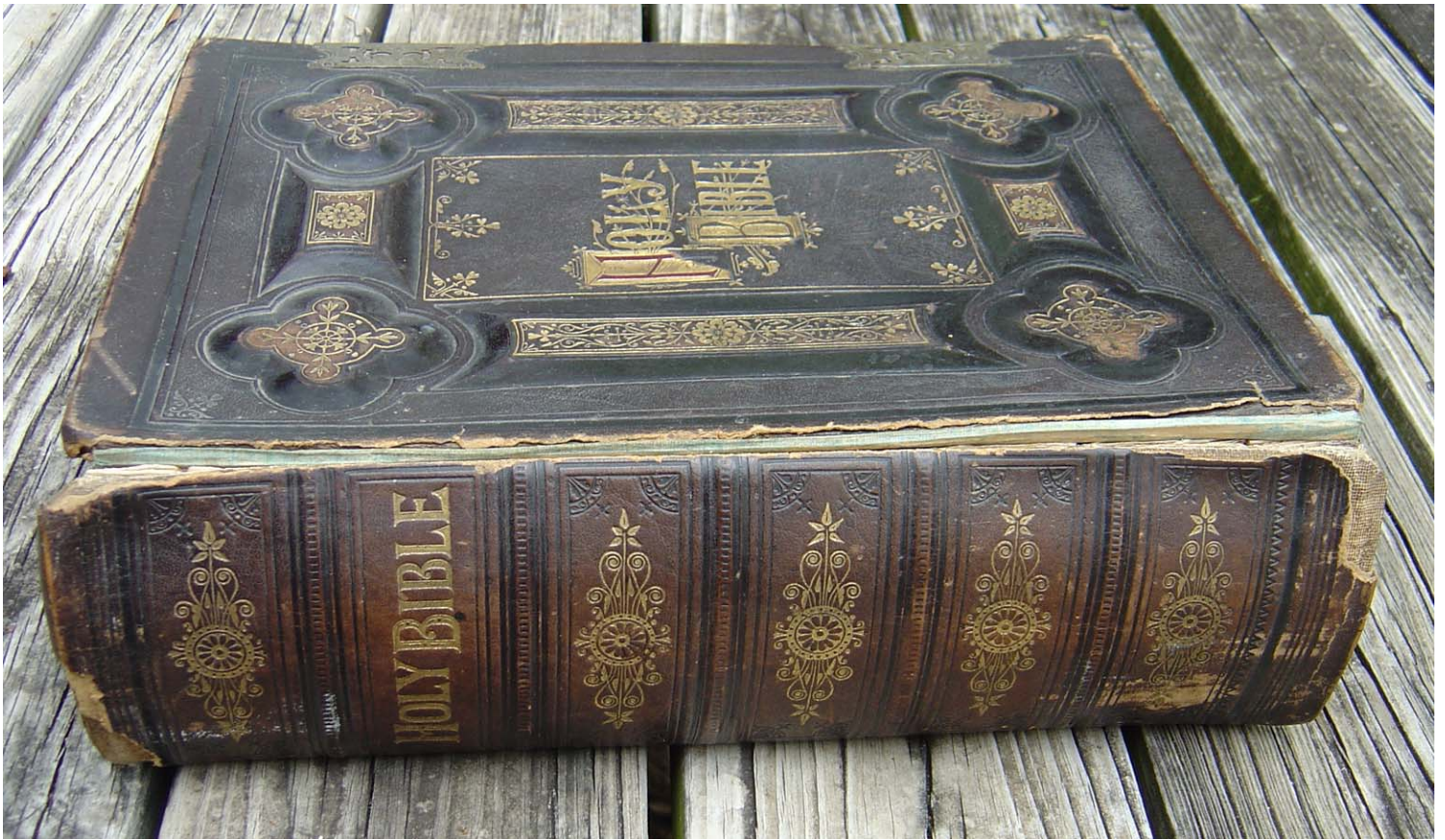
The third set of entries are, I believe, those of her eldest child, Jessie Wiess Whittington, who inherited the old family Bible after her mother's death in 1951.

The Bible

This old family Bible is almost all we have left of the memories of these, our mothers and fathers of years gone by. It is a bit of history and, more importantly, it is your history. This old Bible witnessed joy, sadness, tragedy and grief. Treasure it and know you have something very special. It was an inspiration to its owners and the center piece of their lives. (*Dora and Willie's old home was where the Faith Alive Baptist Church is now and is just across the street from the Bumstead Cemetery, where her parents were buried and where she and Willie and their children are all buried now.*)

Richard Whittington, Dora's grandson, wrote: "*The Bible of Dora Bumstead and Willie S. Wiess is 10" wide, 13.25" high and 3.5" thick with covers .25" thick of molded and tooled leather with gold-stamped designs and red embellishments laid over boards and with metal clasps. A King James version of the Bible, it was published in 1881 or shortly thereafter.*"





THE HOLY BIBLE

WITH

A Devotional and Practical

COMMENTARY.

By the Rev. R. Jamieson, D.D. & the Rev. E. H. Rieu, A.M.



MOSES IN THE BULRUSHES.

A PRACTICAL AND EXPLANATORY
COMMENTARY
ON
THE OLD TESTAMENT.

BY
THE REV. ROBERT JAMIESON, D.D.,
MINISTER OF ST. PAUL'S PARISH, GLASGOW;
AUTHOR OF "EASTERN MANNERS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS,"
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The online OCLC WorldCat library catalog (<http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/default.htm>) describes it this way: Title: The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments: translated out of the original Greek and Hebrew tongues. Author(s): Jamieson, Robert, 1802-1880. ; Practical and explanatory commentary on the Old Testament.; Bickersteth, Edward Henry, 1825-1906. Practical and explanatory commentary on the New Testament. Publication: New York: Virtue & Co., Year: 1881. Description: vi, [6], 39, [1], 729, [1], 458, [2], iv, 423, 76 p., [19] leaves of plates: ill. ; 36 cm. Language: English. Note(s): Includes index. On half title page: The Holy Bible, with a devotional and practical commentary. New Testament has separate title page and pagination. Also contains English Revised New Testament with separate title page and pagination. Class Descriptors: Dewey: 220.52032. Other Titles: Bible. English. Authorized. 1881.; Bible.; N.T.; English.; English Revised.; 1881. Responsibility: with a practical and explanatory commentary, the work of the most eminent scholars of the day, on the Old Testament by Robert Jamieson; on the New Testament by Edward Henry Bickersteth; and a philosophical, historical, biographical and geographical supplement by Albert Leighton Rawson; with many hundred illustrations engraved on steel, wood, and in colors ... Document Type: Book. Entry: 19860130. Update: 20020524. Accession No: OCLC: 13085539

The Ramseyer-Northern Bible Society Museum Collection at the The University of Minnesota Duluth <http://www.d.umn.edu/lib/bible/bibliog/e03.html> attributes its publication date to the 1860's and describes it thus: The Holy Bible with a Devotional and Practical Commentary, by the Rev. R. Jamieson & the Rev. E. H. Bickersteth. London, James S. Virtue, nd {186-?}; viii, 39, 730, 460, 423, 76p. illus. 36cm. Heavy embossed boards, clasps. NUC 53:NBi 0006340. F915

Another of the Ramseyer-Northern entries indicates the Bible has no date of publication (this one has no date either) and reads: The Holy Bible with a devotional and practical commentary by The Rev. R. Jamieson & the Rev. E. H. Bickersteth. London, James S. Virtue, nd. viii, 39, 730, 459, iv, 423, 76p. illus. 36cm. Heavy embossed boards, clasps. F196

The antique book shop Antiquariaat De Rijzende Zon, Tilburg, Holland had one for sale:

<http://www.nvva.nl/rijzendezon/catalogs/c00115.htm>

58 NN. The Holy Bible with A Devotional and Practical Commentary by Rev. R. Jamieson and Rev. E. Bickersteth. London & New York., James S. Virtue., 1865. 37 x 30 cms, frontispiece, engraved titlepage, ii p. with title, contents. Introduction of viii p., 2 folios for family records (empty), 730, 460 p., engraved titlepage of the new testament, titlepage, iv, 424 p., 36 steelengraved plates and 2 col. maps outside the text. some dog's ears. plates stained. some plates with waterspots.guilded edges. contemp. goldstamped calf with wear, hinges of front cover weak. a used copy.

EUR 100,-

weight 11 kilos.

BIRDS

Mary Melissa Sims

born April 8th 1861

Blakely Miller Co Georgia

W. L. Wiess

born June 20th 1862

Wiess Bluff Jasper Co. Texas

Ann Wiess

born March 2nd 1882

Gains Jasper Co Texas

William Napoleon Wiess

born Apr 16th 1883

Mount Carmel Tyler Co Texas

Thomas Edward Wiess

born March 21st 1888

Beaumont Jefferson Co Texas

Jessie Wiess

born Sep 21th 1892

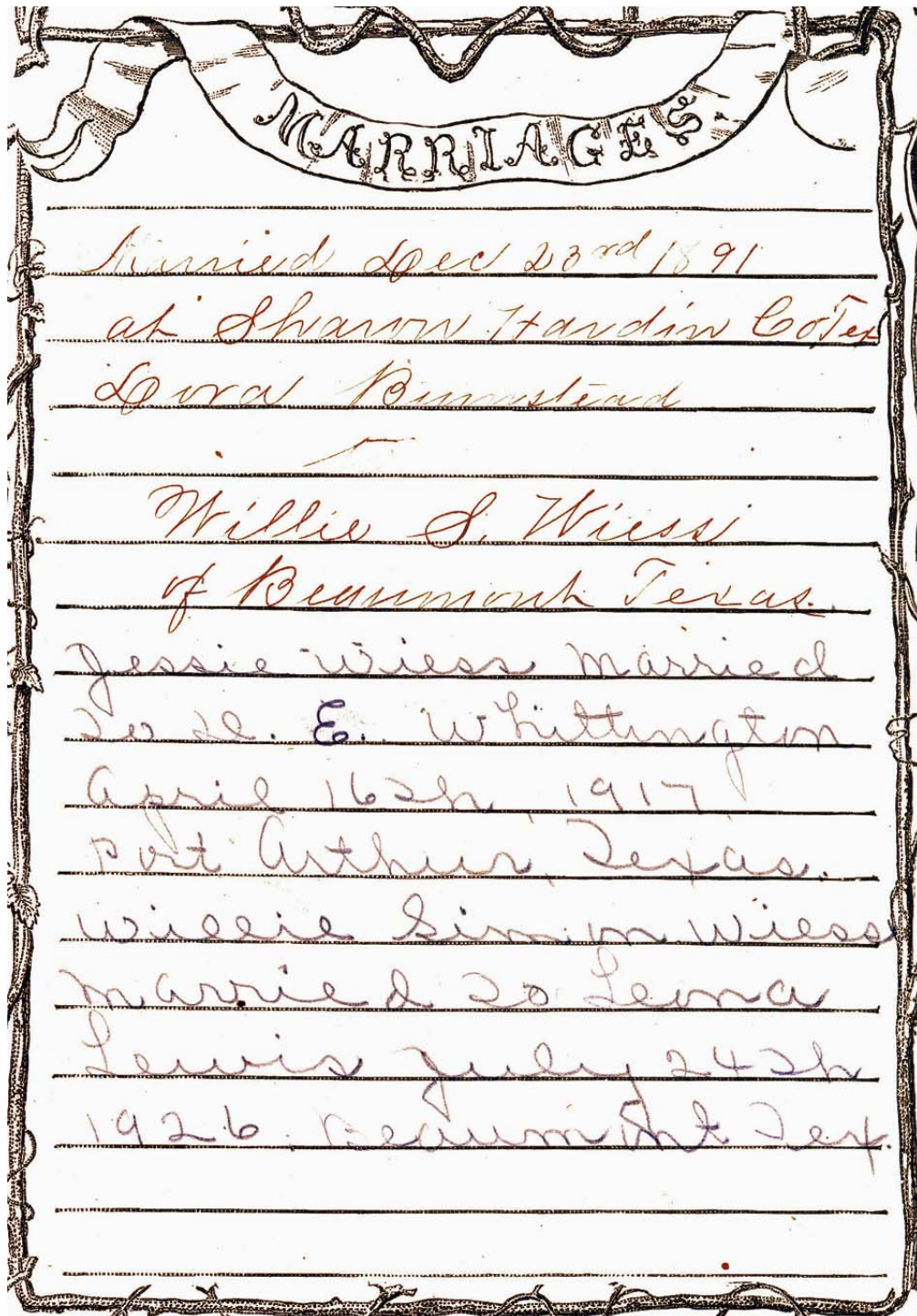
Willie Simon Wiess

born May 14th 1894

FAMILY RECORD.

MARRIAGES.

Married April 22nd 1891
 at Sharon Hardin Co. Tex.
 Loral Bumstead
 to
 Willie S. Wiess
 of Beaumont Texas
 Jessie Wiess married
 to E. E. Whittington
 April 16th 1917
 Port Arthur Texas.
 Wiessie Simpson Wiess
 married to Lerma
 Lewis July 24th
 1926. Beaumont Tex.



Mary M. Wiess
Died March 11th 1889
Beaumont Jefferson Co Texas
Thomas Edward Wiess
Died June 17th 1889
Mount Corns Tyler Co Texas
William S. Wiess
Died November 10th 1893.
W. N. Wiess died Summer
of 1903 at age of 18 years.
Dorothy Ellen the infant
daughter of Jessie + Walter
Whittington died January
25th 1914. Port Arthur Texas.

Births

Wendy Ellen Lee Whittington
Born Jan. 15th, 1918. P. Arthur Tex.
Rosemary Whittington Born April
21st, 1919. Port Arthur Texas.
Gloria Margaret Whittington
Born January 13, 1921. P. A. Tex.
William Deaton Whittington
Born Jan. 11th, 1925. P. Arthur
J. Edward Whittington Born
Feb. 17th, 1927. Port Arthur
Wardus Wiess Whittington
Born November 14th, 1928.
Port Arthur Texas.
Martha Jane Wiess Born
June 20th, 1927. Beaumont,
Texas. 8 o'clock Monday A. M.
William Lewis Wiess
Born August 17th, 1928
6.30 o'clock Friday A. M.
Beaumont Texas.
Richard Whitfield Whittington, Born July 2, 1931
at Port Arthur, Texas

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"The words of God are to theology what the facts of nature are to science : they may not be set aside by reasoning, whether we can harmonise them or not, they claim the obedience of faith."—W. TAIT.

LONDON:
VIRTUE & CO., CITY ROAD AND IVY LANE.