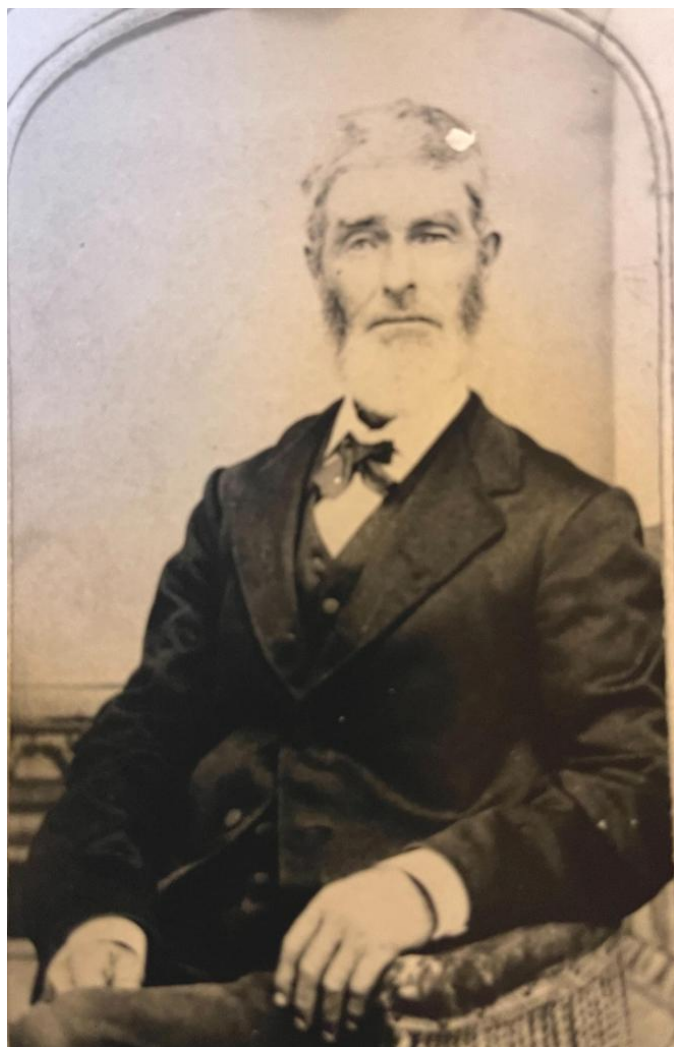


John Burleson Jr. (1812-1890)

From Alabama to Macoupin County, Illinois



The January-March 2023 issue of the “Recollections of the Burleson Family Research Group” includes Jim Burleson’s excellent article about John Burleson Jr. and some of his descendants. Today’s presentation is a follow-up to that article and will provide a list of resources for those interested in the line and some information on the early life of John Burleson Jr.

From the time he arrived in Illinois in 1827 until he died in 1890, the life of John Burleson Jr. is fairly well documented. See page 661 of Burleson Family Association Bulletin, May 1986 issue for family group sheet of John Burleson Jr. and his first wife, Elizabeth Gimlin (1819-1861) and page 794 of BFA Bulletin, May 1987 issue for family group sheet of John Burleson Jr. and his second wife, Elizabeth Smart (1829-1924.) What is not so well documented is John Jr’s life before his 1827 journey. Numerous gray areas exist in his ancestry and quite a bit of misinformation has surfaced in the past several years that only adds to the difficulty in researching this line. The lack of information on the lives of his father and mother has been a gray area not so easily brought to light.

John Burleson Sr. (circa 1768-1824) is one of the least documented sons of Aaron Burleson (circa 1726-1782). He is listed as one of the thirteen children in Aaron’s last will and testament written in 1781 in Sullivan

County, North Carolina (later Tennessee). He is shown as a minor child, however, his birth year can only be estimated based on the birth years of his younger brothers, Jonathan, Joseph and James. In March 1819 Anne Newport Royall wrote of her conversations with Joseph Burleson (1770-1849) while she was staying at his Inn in Moulton, Lawrence County Alabama. Joseph talked of an older brother “not yet fourteen” when their father was killed in 1782. This older brother would have been John, and if Joseph’s recollections were correct, the birth year of John can be estimated as 1768. Joseph Burleson’s interviews with Anne Royall can be found in the book, “Letters from Alabama 1817-1822”, by Anne Newport Royall.

The ancestries of the two wives of John Sr. are not known. For years histories have stated John Sr’s first wife was Abigail Adair, the sister of John Adair, an early governor of Kentucky. However, John Adair had no sister named Abigail. If the “Abigail” who married John Burleson Sr. was any close relation to Governor Adair, she would have had to been Abigail Moore the niece of Governor Adair. William and Mary Adair were the parents of Governor John Adair. One of their children was Betsy Adair who married John Moore. Included in their fifteen children was a daughter named Abigail who “maybe” became the wife of John Burleson Sr. This theory was held by Dr. Woody Werking and Edna Boyd, two early Burleson family researchers who relied on the book, “The Adair History & Genealogy” written by James Barnett Adair, MD, published in 1924. See page 1574, Burleson Family

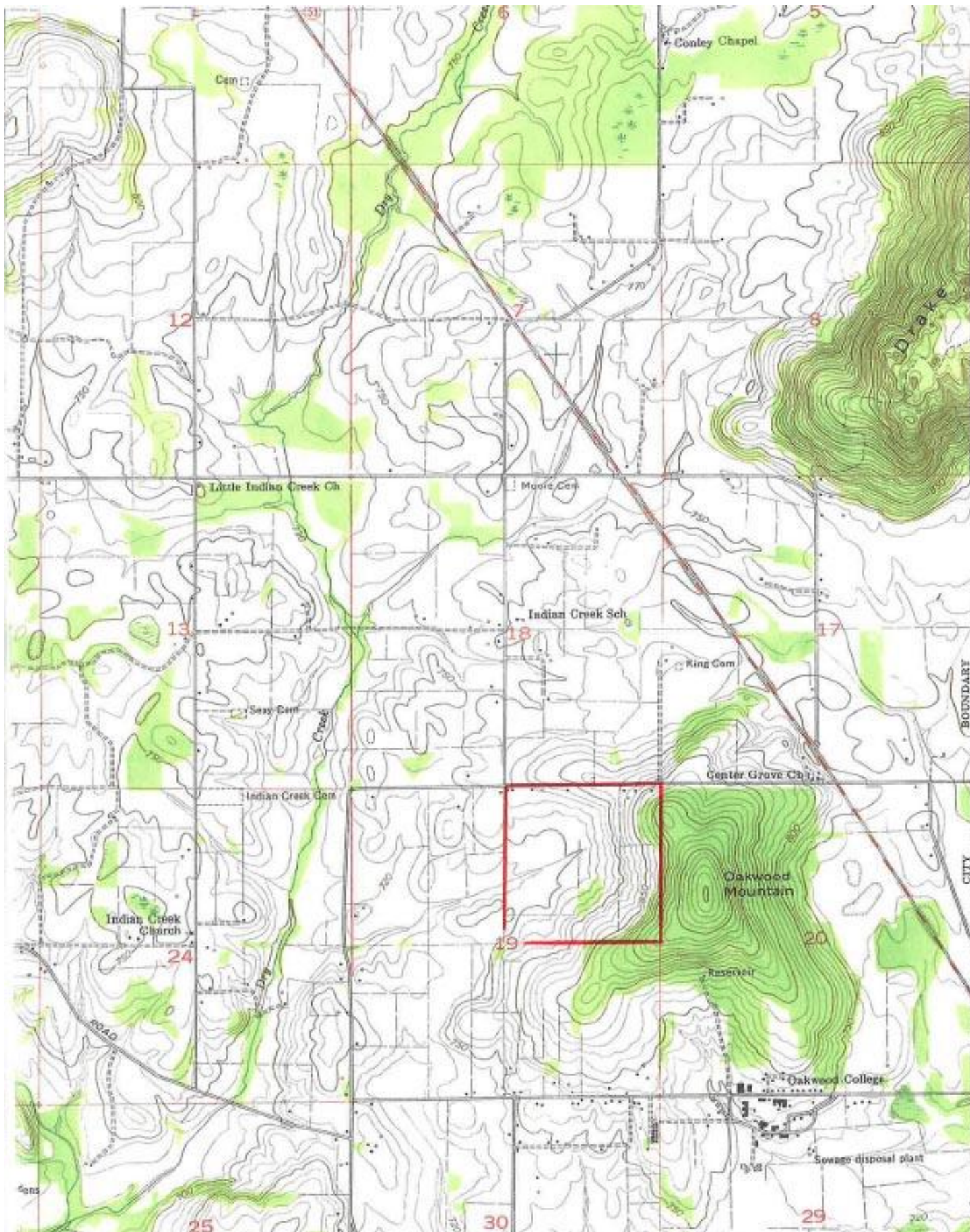
Association Bulletin, November 1991. John Sr. and Abigail had three children, Betsy, Jonathan and Aaron. Jonathan (1789-1866) is the best documented of the three. He became a large-scale planter in Morgan County, Alabama and his home "Westview" has been the cover image for the Burleson Family Association Bulletin since 1981.

The family history of John Sr's second wife, Mary "Polly" Hodges (DOB unknown-1847) is no clearer than his first wife's. Her maiden-name is not known. By her first marriage to a Mr. Hodges, she had at least one son, Seth Hodges (circa 1788-1841). After the death of her first husband, she married John Burleson Sr. whose first wife had died circa 1796. The date and place of their marriage are unknown as well as the number and names of all their children. Unfortunately, neither John Sr. nor Mary could read or write, and few records exist of their time together. No family bible has been found and to my knowledge no accurate record of the names and birth dates of all their children has been discovered. In recent years the myth that John Burleson Senior had the middle name of "Crawford" has taken root and only confuses the issue. John did not have a middle name.

One of the older children of John Sr. and Mary was a daughter "Temperance". She married Levi Taylor (circa 1792-1861) in Madison County, Alabama in 1816. During their life together, they lived in Madison County, Alabama, Morgan County, Alabama, Marion County, Alabama, Fayette County, Alabama and Nacogdoches County, Texas. Based on federal census records for the years 1830, 1840, 1850, 1860 and 1870, one can find the birth year for Temperance varying from 1796 to 1798 to 1800. Her place of birth varies from North Carolina to Kentucky to Tennessee. So, you can see, even the records available are confusing.

Verified information on John Burleson Sr. and his wife, Mary, after their marriage in the 1790's is limited. What we do know is they did live in Kentucky until the early 1800's and then moved to Tennessee. They lived in what was then west Tennessee (now middle Tennessee) until about 1807. In either 1807 or 1808 they moved to northern Alabama, then a part of the Mississippi Territory. John Sr., and his brothers, Joseph and James settled along Limestone Creek in what later became Limestone County. Madison County, which had been formed in 1808, was located east of the Limestone Creek area. The land west of Madison County was still claimed by the Chickasaw Indian tribe in the early 1800's. This resulted in the Burleson's and about two hundred other families being considered "intruders" on Indian lands. In the 1960's a copy of the original list of Intruders living in various locations in Limestone County was obtained from the National Archives from their Cherokee Indian Agency files. Included in the list are the families of John, Joseph and James who are shown living along Limestone Creek on 29 May 1809. By late June 1809, federal troops forced all intruders off Chickasaw lands. It appears John and his family moved to Madison County. However, by the summer of 1810, most of the families, including the John and James Burleson families, had moved back onto Chickasaw lands. On 5 September 1810, a petition signed by 450 intruders was sent to President James Madison. See the 1938 books, "The Territorial Papers of the United States: Mississippi, Volumes V and VI" edited by Clarence Edwin Carter. The petition, which requested the intruders be allowed to stay on Chickasaw lands, included the names of James Burleson, John Burleson and John's son, Jonathan Burleson. But again, they were not allowed to stay as federal troops forced the families off the land and back to Madison County. There, John and his family stayed until about 1817.

General Land Office records verify John Burleson filing to purchase from the government the NE1/4 of Section 19, Township 3 South, Range 1 West, Madison County, Alabama. The quarter section contained 158.60 acres and is located in west central Madison County. Today, the city of Huntsville has grown to include this property. John filed for the purchase on 24 February 1812, a little more than a month before the birth of John Burleson Jr. on 1 April 1812. As with most land purchases in those days, John financed the sale. He paid the \$317.20 purchase price plus interest in four installments with the last being made 13 February 1816. The patent for the tract was issued on 15 April 1816. When he filed to purchase the land in 1812, the land office agent in Huntsville spelled his last name "Burleson". When the patent was issued in Washington D C in 1816, John's last name was spelled "Burlison".



John Burleson Jr. was a little over a year old when the Creek Indian War started in the late summer of 1813. His father, John Sr. joined Colonel Peter Perkins' 7th Regiment of the Madison County Militia. John Sr. served in the militia from 14 November 1813, until his enlistment period ended 20 December 1813. His military record along with the records of the other eight Burleson relatives who served in the 7th Regiment are preserved on microfilm located in the Huntsville-Madison County Library in Huntsville, Alabama. Note: Mary's son by her first marriage, Seth Hodges, served as a corporal in the 7th Regiment. Located in the Dyas Collection at the Tennessee State Library & Archives in Nashville, Tennessee is information showing John Burleson Sr. and his two brothers, Joseph and James receiving payment in 1815 for use of their wagons for carrying supplies to General Andrew Jackson's army during the Creek War. Beyond that I have not found any information concerning John Burleson Senior's activities during the war.

After the war John Sr., and his family continued to live in Madison County until early 1817. Deed records show John Sr. selling his Madison County farm in two tracts. (See BFA Bulletin, May 1993 issue, Page 1831.) On 10 December 1816, John and Mary Burleson sold 84 acres of their farm to William Phillips. Deed is recorded in Deed Book C, page 3. On 29 March 1817, John and Mary sold the remaining 73.5 acres to John Austin. The conveyance is recorded in Deed Book C, page 51 of Madison County, Alabama deed records.

Soon after selling his farm, John moved his family south across the Tennessee River into what became Cotaco County (name changed to Morgan County in 1821.) He settled his family near the town of Somerville which became the county seat in 1818. Somerville is located in central Morgan County about six miles south of the Tennessee River. On 14 September 1818, county court records list John Burleson as one of seven road jurors appointed to approve the route of a proposed road to extend northern from Somerville to Crabbe's Ferry on the Tennessee River. Book 1 of the Cotaco County Court records from 1818 to 1823 contain this appointment. The same volume contains three other road work appointments for John Sr., the last being done on 7 May 1821. These early court records can be found at the Morgan County Archives in Decatur, Alabama.

In 1821, John moved his family to the Wolftown area in west central Morgan County, less than one mile east of the Morgan-Lawrence County line. In July 1818, Joseph Inman filed to purchase from the government a quarter section of land described as the NE1/4 of Section 19, Township 6 South and Range 5 West. He financed the sale and made payments until 5 September 1821, when John Burleson was assigned Inman's interest in the East1/2 of the approximate 160-acre tract. The west half of the quarter section was relinquished back to the government at that time. Information for this transaction can be found in Tract Book records of the General Land Office of the Bureau of Land Management found online at: gloreCORDS.blm.gov. John and his family, including John Jr., were living on this farm when John Sr. died in 1824. John's date of death is unknown as is his burial place. Some researchers use the date 27 November 1824, as John's death date, however, that is the date John and Mary's oldest son, James Burleson (1803-1856) filed a petition with the Probate Judge of Morgan County to settle John's estate. John Sr. possibly died several weeks before the petition was filed. See page 921 of BFA Bulletin, February 1988 issue for the Orphans Court records pertaining to the settlement of John Sr's estate. On 27 November 1824, the court appointed John's widow, Mary Burleson, as guardian of her two minor children, Thomas Burleson and John Burleson. This is the only reference found to date which mentions John Jr's time in Morgan County. NOTE: the 1820 federal census, which could have provided information on the John Sr. family, was lost. The Orphans Court records are also the only known reference to the son, Thomas. What became of him after 1824 is unknown. On 31 December 1824 the court appointed Jonathan Burleson (1789-1866), Griggs Putman and John Putman as commissioners with instructions to sell the real estate of John Burleson Sr. James Burleson purchased his father's 80 acres as of 28 February 1825. John had financed the purchase of the farm in 1821, therefore title to the land was still held by the federal government. James received the purchase certificate for the 80 acres and on 12 March 1825, he assigned (sold) the certificate to Charles Royer who completed payment on the tract and was issued the patent 25 July 1825.

Mary and some of her children, including John Jr. moved from Alabama to Tennessee in either 1825 or 1826. It is speculated she lived in Tennessee for at least one year before moving to Illinois in 1827, however, the

exact dates are unknown. Until recently, it was not known where in Tennessee, Mary and her children moved after leaving Alabama. It is now known Mary and her family moved to Hardeman County, Tennessee and lived there until the final move to Illinois. Several Burleson family members were living in Hardeman County by the time Mary arrived. Aaron Burleson (13 July 1791-23 August 1828) had brought his family to Hardeman County from Lawrence County, Alabama in the early 1820's. See page 3470 of BFA Bulletin, Spring 2013 issue for the family bible record of Aaron and his wife, Rebecca Burleson. Aaron was the son of John Burleson Sr. and his first wife, Abigail, therefore he was a half-brother of John Jr. John Burleson Sr's brother James Burleson (1775-1836) and his family were also living in Hardeman County at that time. See page 389 of BFA Bulletin, August 1984 issue for start of history and family group sheet for James Burleson. Hardeman County is located in southwest Tennessee about forty miles east of Memphis and about a hundred miles northwest of the Morgan-Lawrence County areas in Alabama where these Burleson families moved from. In 1818, the Chickasaw Indian tribe ceded most of the land in what became west Tennessee to the United States government. Hardeman County was officially organized in 1823, however, several white families were living there by that time.

The proof Mary and her family lived in Hardeman County comes from a letter written by Edward Blakely Burleson (28 July 1838-8 March 1917) to John Burleson Jr. in answer to a letter John Jr sent to Bastrop County, Texas in early September 1877. The letter is so entertaining and informative it has been decided to include the entire letter in this article. My file contains only a transcribed copy of the letter sent to Howard Lamar Burleson (1892-1970) by Mary Sweetman, BFA #15 in the early 1960's. Mary was the great granddaughter of John Burleson Jr. The letter has been lying unread in my files since 1976. Without my research for this article, it would probably still be unread. As you read the letter keep in mind, original spellings have been kept intact.

The State of Texas
County of Bastrop
Sept. 16, A. D. 1877

Mr. John Burleson
Of Carlinville, Macoupin, Ill.

Dear Uncle,

Not knowing the relationship that exists between you and myself, and your age, you will pardon a strange relation for addressing you thus, as Uncle. However, this makes no difference for I have never heard of one of the name that pretends to deny the relationship

Uncle, I see from your letter that you have been in Ill. for fifty years, and was originally from the same Coty. and State as my ancestors, Haweman (Hardeman) Co., Tenn. My father left there in 1832 with an older brother, Edward Burleson, better known in Texas as Gen Ed Burleson, the great Indian fighter. The Uncle Ed has been dead since 1852. There were of my grandfathers family quite a no. of children. I will attempt to acquaint you as nearly as I can with their names. Grandfathers name was James, decd. (deceased) who is buried upon Texas soil. His oldest daughter was Sarah, decd., m. (married) a man by the name of Robert Thrasher, decd. 2. Volley married Ezekial Owens 3. Mary m. a Taylor (Martin) 4. Edward m. Sarah Owens, 5. James decd. 6. Jacob killed by Indians in Texas 7. Jonathan who is my father and lives close to me. 8. Aaron, who lives at Webberville, Travis Co. 9. There was John decd., who was older than father.

I believe, Uncle, that I have mentioned all of my family. You will notice that there are but three left. Yes, there is one more, Joseph, who is the oldest brother. He was still living the last account, making four left. All those who are decd. are buried beneath Texas soil, except Sarah who went to Ark. one year ago to visit her sons and died there in her 80th year. Of myself, Uncle, I am a native Texian, was born where the town of Bastrop now stands in the year 1838, and what little education I am in possession of was obtained here under many disadvantageous circumstances. I live on the bank of the Colorado River and am professionally a farmer. Uncle your letter of the 7th inst., to Aaron Burleson, is the one I am attempting to answer now, there being no Aaron now living in this county, and your letter being placed in my box, I feel it my duty to answer, then forward it to Uncle Aaron at Webberville, Travis Co. Texas. There was another Aaron in this county, an old man, but he has been dead for 7 or 8

years. He was a cousin to my father and a son of old Uncle Joe, who came to this county in the early days. Really there is a large connection in this state and county, but I am not prepared to trace their genealogy to your satisfaction. There is quite a large family of Burleson in Leon Co. Texas. Those are the families of Isaac, Joshua and Grum..... Burleson. Their postoffice is Jewett. There is also another family at Waco, Texas. Those are Rufus and Richard Burleson, both Baptist Preachers. In fact they are scattered from the Red River on the north to the Rio Grande on the south. Well Uncle, I have given you all the information that I am in possession of, in and about the Burlesons, excepting that, I can say this, that there are all grades, kinds, professions, cliques and ?..... among them. Some are ministers, some doctors, merchants, farmers, and many are drunken, worthless men.

But, enough on this subject. I will now do my best to inform you relative to this country, soil, products etc. I will commence and give you the best description I can from memory, not having a map for a guide. Well commencing at Barey (possibly Bowie) on the Red River thence southeast to Travis County, on the Colorado River, all the country east and north of these two points might, I suppose be timbered and sandy soil interspersed with prairie and black soil and vicie versy – between the same two points, but above, say NW and SW for some distance, is considered prairie country with dark rich silt, and from the Colorado River S-SW and SE is termed as prairie country with fine lands, yet more or less subject to droth (drought).

As to the value of lands, they are unusually low at this time, all together owing to the unusual hard times, as we term it, or rather the scarsety of money. Land in the American Valley of the Colorado River, below Austin the Capitol, are worth from ten to fifty dollars per acre, altogether owing to the locality, but equally as good land situated on creeks can be had for from five to ten dollars per acre improved. The unimproved for from three to eight dollars. Remember this is the heart of the farming country. Bastrop county is considered one among the best farming counties in the state, adapted to a greater variety of products than any other, because we have both classes of soil. Nevertheless, we have poor crops this year on account of Grasshoppers in the spring. We have corn in abundance that cannot be disposed of at 25 cents a bushel. Oats yield 75 to 80 bushel per acres, worth 20 cents. Barley 50 cents, Cotton nine and a half cents to ten cents per lb. Bacon retailed at 11 cts. Sogrum 25 cts. a gallon. All other things that a farmer produces in proportion. You see instantly, why the farmer sings out hard times, because his products are low. Yet, it is human nature not to be satisfied with well doing.

The average yield of wheat per acre is 10 to 30 bu. per acre and is worth 75 cents to one dollar per bushel. There will be more grain around this fall and next spring than ever before in this country. Enough about the Colorado, its advantages and disadvantages. We will now hop to west and northwest Texas. Here we have some fine lands and cheap. This land can be had for one to two dollars per acre, owing to situation and improvements, though this year that part of the state has failed. I suppose on account of frost in June that killed the early corn in the silk and tassle. Our cropping season commences in March and planting up to May 1st and make good crops. Lands rent in many ways, some for cash from 3 to 5 dollars per acre. Some for 1 bale of cotton for ten acres. Some 1/3 and 1/4. Some 1/2 and 1/2. Stock horses are low, but mules in good demand. Texas cows and calves 10 to 13 dollars, beef brisk, hogs moderate, Mexican sheep low, graded fair good round prices. And for native musquit (mesquite) crops for graising purposes, the world can't beat it.

I have, in my weak way, delt out to you all the information that I am capable of doing at present, unless you wish to know something more which will be imparted on recpt. of letter from you or your family. I would not advise a man of your age to break-up and take such a burden on your shoulders as you would have to take to move to Texas, without it is to better the position of your family, though I feel more than satisfied that your family would better their condition by hunting new country. There was a man that lived with me last year from your state and he tells me that he can do better here than there. I also conversed with another today and he makes about the same statement. He says we have the deepest and best soil that he ever saw.

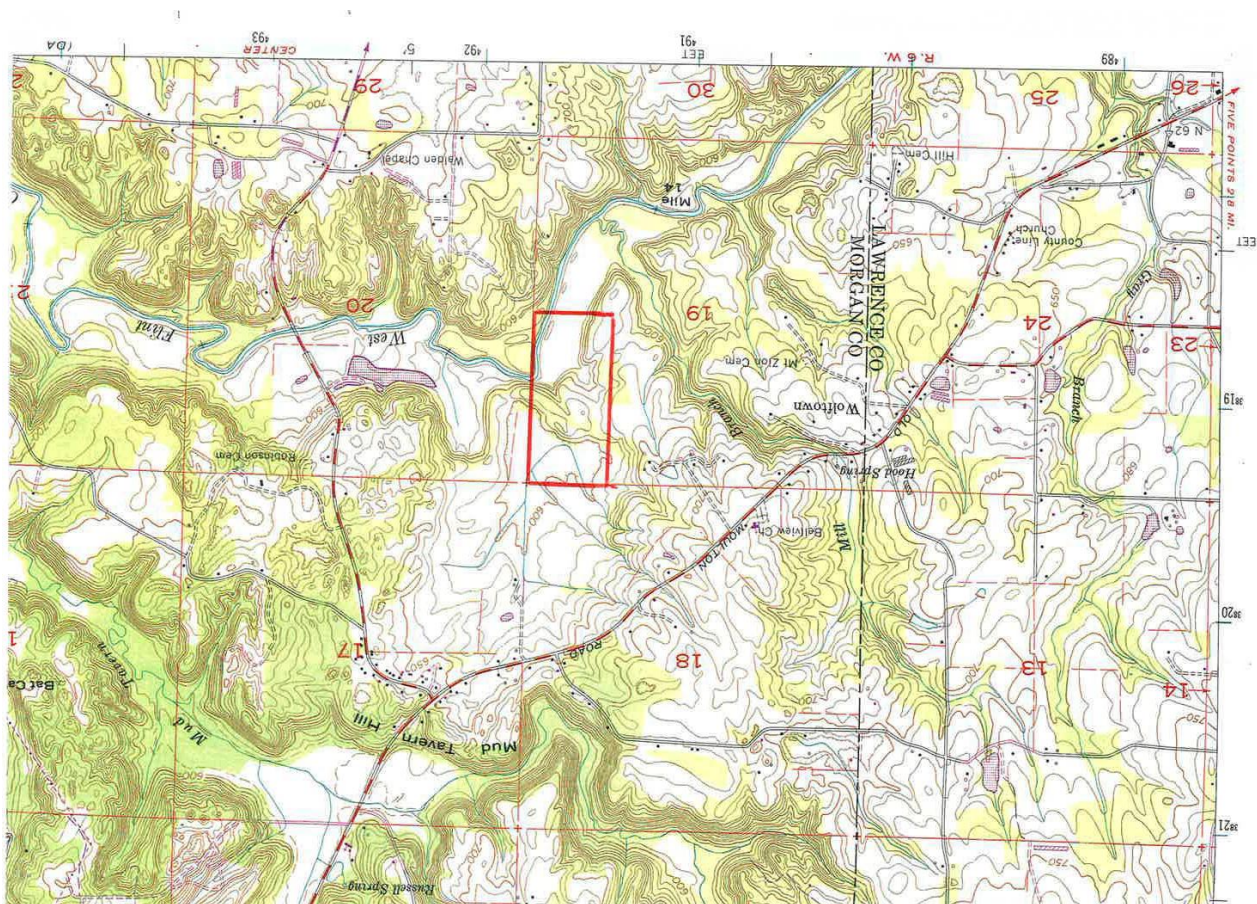
With this I close, promising to give you or your family all the information that I can by answering all interagatories that you may wish to ask, hoping to here from you soon, I subscribe myself - - - -

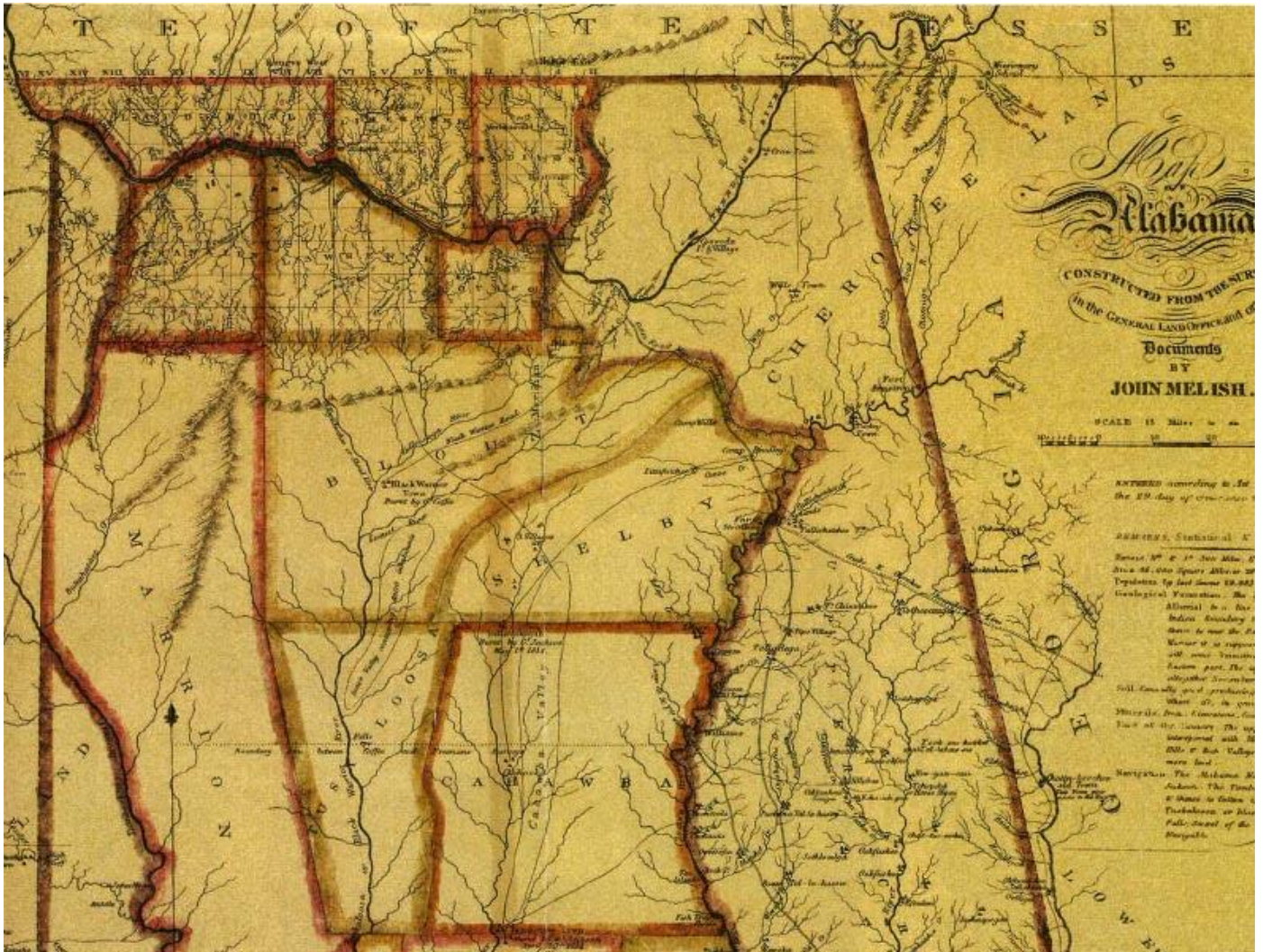
Ed B. Burleson

After this first letter, John Jr. and his daughter, Sarah E. Burleson became pen pals with Ed B. Other letters from Ed B. can be found beginning on page 573 of BFA Bulletin, November 1985 issue. Based on these later letters, it appears John Jr. in early 1878, decided against a move to Texas. Sarah Elizabeth Burleson (9 December 1865 – 23 December 1941) was the oldest of the two children of John Jr. and his second wife, Elizabeth Smart, who had been widowed twice by the Thomas brothers before her marriage to John Jr. in early 1865. Sarah Elizabeth Burleson had one sibling, a brother, Seth Henry Burleson (1867-1960). Sarah E. married 18 March 1884 to Charles Casper Pearson Drury. They had six children, one of whom was Sue Francis Drury born 20 May 1891. Sue was married three times, first to Richard Roberts, second to Henry Cornelius and third to Dr. James W. Dollin. By Sue's second marriage, she had one child, Mary Elizabeth Cornelius. Mary married a Sweetman. It is because of Mary Sweetman, we have the Ed B. Burleson letters. Her grandmother, Sarah Elizabeth Drury, saved the letters and by the early 1960's Mary was in possession of them. Mary began corresponding with my uncle and noted family genealogist Howard Burleson in the early 1960's and sent him transcribed copies of some of the letters. Both Mary Sweetman and Howard Burleson were Great-Great Grandchildren of John Burleson Sr. After my Uncle Howard died in 1970, his widow, Nell Masterson Burleson gave copies to me in 1976. Mary Sweetman became an early member of the Burleson Family Association in 1981 and contributed generously her information on the John Burleson Jr. family. Hopefully, her research papers have survived with other family members.

As you can determine from the above article, information on the early years of John Burleson Jr, and his parents is limited. As more research is undertaken, I trust new information can be discovered which will assist us in having a better understanding of the history of not just this branch, but all the branches of our Burleson Family.

David A. Burleson
November 8, 2023





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