

WILLIAM NELSON COOMBES – A HISTORY

PIONEER WILLIAM NELSON COOMBES OF DALLAS COUNTY, AND HIS FAMILY

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I: BEFORE WILLIAM'S BIRTH

William Nelson Coombes arrived in Dallas in 1843, leaving behind the Kentucky farm where he had been born forty years earlier. The Coombes family hadn't been in Kentucky especially long, nor was Kentucky especially highly developed, when William Coombes left for Texas.

As was common with American names, spelling of the Coombes name was inconsistent until the late-1800s. William earlier sometimes signed his name "Coombs". Kentucky records of the 1840s also use "Coomes", "Cooms", or "Coombz". One of William's brothers used "Combs". We do not know their exact pronunciations. Today the Texas family spells the name "Coombes" and pronounces it "combs" – like hair-dressing implements; while the common pronunciation of Coombs Creek – named for William Coombes -- is "cooms", rhyming with "rooms". This article uses only "Coombes", and expects readers to understand that old records used various spellings.

Popular history portrays Abraham Lincoln being born in a log cabin – dirt floor – frontier wilderness. Lincoln was born in Larue County, Kentucky, adjacent to the Nelson County where William Coombes had been born six years earlier. William's grandfather, John W. Luckens Coombs, had been born in Loudoun County, Virginia in 1735¹ into a colonial family of typical English ancestry. John Combs migrated westward into Pennsylvania where, sometime before 1759, in the low furrows of the Appalachian mountains near McConnellsburg, he married Alice Nelson Jolly (1744-1814).² William's father, Nelson Coombes (1771-1838) was then born in this mountainous region, at Tonoloway, as their eighth child³. John Coombs served in 1777 as a Patriot soldier in the American Revolution.⁴ In 1780, in a caravan with about a dozen other families, he again moved west, traveling about 100 miles to the Ohio River, and then rafting down to the site of present-day Louisville, Kentucky. After a year there, they rafted further down the Ohio to the mouth of Sinking Creek, then moved inland to the present site of Hardinsburg, where their guide William (Indian Bill) Hardin, constructed "Hardin's Fort", their home for the next several years.⁵ Kentucky became a new state in 1792. The family of John and Alice Coombes later moved east to Nelson County where John Coombs died in November 1801, at about age sixty-six,⁶ His grandson William was born there two years later. By the way, the Nelson County's name being the same as the Coombes family's Nelson name is purely co-incidental.⁷

William Coombes' mother, Hannah Glover (1770-1856), had been born in Essex County, New Jersey.⁸ Her family was also moving west. It appears that she and young Nelson Coombes were married in the mountains of southwestern Pennsylvania – where both Hannah's parents and the young Coombes couple enrolled in the first U.S. Census, in 1790.⁹ While Nelson's father John Coombs had migrated ahead to Kentucky, Nelson lingered in Pennsylvania, later moving west to join his parents in Nelson County about twelve years later -- sometime before 1792.¹⁰

The migrations to Kentucky of various branches of the Coombes family are not told here in complete detail. I simply wish for readers to see a clan making periodic group moves westward, searching for new farm land; and a Kentucky still in a relatively early stage of pioneer development when William Coombes was born in Nelson County in 1803.

2: WILLIAM'S LIFE IN KENTUCKY

William Nelson Coombes was born, presumably at his parent's farm along Simpson's Creek near the town of Bloomfield, Nelson County, Kentucky, on the 8th of January 1803. He was the youngest of 7 children for his parents, Nelson Coombs (1771-1838) and Hannah (Glover) Coombs (1770-1856).¹¹ Though complete lists of household names were not included in the 1820 Census, William, age 17, was likely living in this Nelson County household of "Nelson Coombz" which included 6 White males, 5 White females, and 4 female Slaves.

This article does not intend to give anything close to a complete account of our William's time in Kentucky – though Nelson County was where William Nelson Coombes spent most of his life. There were dozens of other Coombes family members also living in Nelson County at that time – including other men with the name William Coombes.¹²

As late as 1794, Indian attacks had threatened William's grandparents living at Hardin's Fort in western Kentucky; but William and his parents never experienced any Indian hostilities. Nelson County of their day, however, was probably still full of colorful stories about recent White Settler relationships with Indians -- both hostile and friendly.

Nothing was found about any Coombes family political allegiance or aspirations.

We know that before they left for Texas our William and Ivy Coombes were literate – could sign their names, and presumably read and write – probably trained by the public school tradition White Settlers brought from England. But William's father, Nelson Coombs, appears to have been illiterate, making "his mark" (rather than rendering his signature) on his son's marriage bond, dated 14th October 1822. In that document neighbor Zachariah Green is recorded as having given consent to his daughter's engagement.¹³

At the time of this engagement, Zachariah Green (1783-1837) and his wife Frances (Duncan) Green (1781-1864) had six daughters – William's future wife Ivy being oldest – and three sons. The 1820 Census enrolled their household holding two male Slaves. Both households were listed on the same sheet in the 1820 Census, so the Coombes were likely living close to the Greens.

At Bloomfield, Nelson County, Kentucky, Baptist minister Walter Stallard married 19 year old William Nelson Coombes with 17 year old Ivy Green on the 17th of October, 1822.¹⁴

- Their first child was Levin Green Coombes, born on the 9th of July 1823;
- second was son Isaac Nelson Coombes, born on 24th October 1825;
- third was daughter Nancy Coombes, born the 4th of February 1828; and
- their fourth child was daughter Margaret Adda Coombes, born on the 25th of May 1830.¹⁵

By the time of the 1830 U.S. Census, the household of William Coombes included 4 White males, two White females, and two Slaves (males of age 10-20). This enrollment cited two adult White males of age 20-30 -- it is unclear who the fourth White male might have been. Perhaps William's household included a brother or cousin. 1830 Census-taking started after the 1st of June that year; therefore this enrollment included new infant daughter Margaret Adda Coombes. It may be thereby deduced that daughter Nancy Coombes, for whom there is no information after her birth in 1828, had already died before the 1830 Census-takers enumerated the household of William and Ivy Coombes.

- A fifth child was son Zachariah Ellis Coombes, born on the 30th of March, 1833.¹⁶

In 1837 Zachariah Green, Ivy (Green) Coombes' father, died at age 54.¹⁷ The next year William N. Coombes' father, Nelson Coombes, died in Nelson County at about age 67.¹⁸ William then inherited a part of his father's farm.¹⁹

- A sixth child of William and Ivy Coombes, son William Hamilton Coombes, died as a newborn infant in 1840.²⁰

In the 1840 U.S. Census, the Nelson County household of "William Coomes" included 7 White males, two White females, and eight Slaves (5 male and 3 female). Given the ages of the older two adult White males being over the age of 20 -- with William Coombes oldest son, Levin Green Coombes, then being only about 17 years old -- it appears that William's household is again being shared with another adult White male. Neither the 1830 nor 1840 Census explained whether William and/or his wife Ivy own all, or any, of the various slaves in their household. Nelson County tax records in year 1840 show William Coombes owning 292 acres and 2 slaves. Unfortunately Nelson County tax records of 1841-1843 are now lost.²¹ What none of these Census or tax records explain is how William and Ivy Coombs had acquired their slaves -- whether through purchase or through inheritance. Later tax records in Texas, starting three years later, show William Coombes owning no slaves at all -- until tax year 1864, when his household briefly again owned one slave.

On the 12th of June 1841, oldest son Levin Green Coombes (1823-?) married Jane H. Heady (1823-1854) in neighboring Spencer County, Kentucky.²² They were both about 18 years old.

We know little about William Coombes' economic activity during his years in Nelson County, except for one significant act. On the 24th of October 1840, William Coombes signed a series of seven promissory notes, each for \$500. He now owed a total of \$3,500 to neighbor Seymore Stone, the first note payable on the 20th day of September 1842; then two notes payable each September 20th in subsequent years 1843, 1844, and 1845. William Coombes and Seymore Stone were the same age --both had been born in year 1803. Nothing was recorded about their personal relationship. Their assessed total economic worth was roughly equal. Their \$3,500 loan was 30% of the assessed value for all the taxable assets of William Coombes -- it was a big financial risk. We never find out why William Coombes borrowed this money. He apparently paid Seymore Stone \$275.83 -- a fraction of the first promised payment-- then he left for Texas. This unpaid debt plagued William Coombes for the next 26 years.²³

3: THE COOMES FAMILY'S MOVE TO TEXAS

The Republic of Texas enacted legislation in February 1841, authorizing a group of twenty *empressios*, led by William W. Peters (a consortium usually called *The Peters Colony*), to give away free land in north-central Texas to new settlers who built cabins, planted crops, and stayed for at least three years. One square mile of free land would be granted to each married couple, or half a square mile to a single individual. The *empressios* were headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky, about forty miles north of William Coombes' home.

One version tells that news of the Republic of Texas' land giveaway spread rapidly by "word of mouth" through the region around Louisville, starting perhaps within two weeks after the legislation had been passed, the soonest that news from Austin could get back to Kentucky. A second version has the Peters Company printing paper leaflets detailing the grant's contractual terms which were distributed through the countryside around Louisville. It is possible that the Coombes family might have first heard verbal rumors of free land in Texas sometime in February of 1841. The legislation in Texas was not formally signed until the following November, so the first wave of printed leaflets would probably not have appeared until the end of the year. A "*Second Contract*", adding to the Peters Colony's domain the area in today's north Oak Cliff, where the Coombes family eventually settled, was enacted in Austin on the 9th of November 1841. By that time, it looks as if the Coombes family had probably already decided to move to Texas. They were among the first.²⁴ William and his son exchanged their 285 acre farm in Kentucky for 1,920 acres in Texas.

From 1920 until his death in 1933, W.S. Adair authored weekly history articles for *The Dallas Morning News*.²⁵ Three times, Adair's column focused exclusively on stories told by Judge William Nelson Coombes (1857-1939), the grandson of William Nelson Coombes (1803-1867).²⁶ These articles, published in 1925, 1928, and 1931, undoubtedly leave us with invaluable recollections of the Coombes family's move from Kentucky to Texas and about their exploits settling here; but, often the exact facts Adair quoted are impossible to reconcile with records from the past; and when examined closely, some of these stories sound like garbled combinations of what might more logically have been several different separate episodes. W.S. Adair's interviews with Judge W.N. Coombes will be often quoted in this account, but sometimes exception will be taken with the exact details of Judge Coombes' recall. For example: in all three Adair histories, Judge Coombes said that his grandfather's family left Kentucky in year 1841; but today we have the land deed by which William Coombes sold his Kentucky farm, dated 1842.

In that deed, dated 22nd of February 1842, William and Ivy Coombes sold "'all the land now owned by, and in possession of, said William Coombs" to Fieldon Merefield (no relation to the Dallas County Merrifield family) – 284 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres – "on Simpson Creek, near Bloomfield -- Nelson County, Kentucky" -- for \$8,000.00 – receipt of which they acknowledged in the deed. The deed was affirmed, in person, by William and Ivy Coombs to the Clerk of Nelson County, Kentucky on the next day, when the document was filed. The deed described Coombes' farm as three parcels, including land William had inherited from his deceased father, Nelson Coombes.²⁷

The family of William Coombes then packed-up and headed for Texas. The whole family immigrated together, including: William and Ivy Coombes, son Levin Green Coombes and his new wife Jane, sons Isaac Nelson Coombes and Zachariah Ellis Coombes, and daughter Margaret Adda Coombes. "The party made the journey from Kentucky in ox-wagons, bringing their negroes, live stock, household effects and poultry; that is to say, fully prepared to get along without drawing on the outside world. And often when they came to a stream on the rampage, they found it necessary

to let the slow-pace of their oxen degenerate into a stand-still until the stream had spent its rage. But they had an abundance of time, and thought nothing of taking two month in reaching Red River, which they crossed near Clarksville, and took lands there." ²⁸ The group "stopped at the Red River until December 1842', grandson Judge William N. Coombes recalled." ²⁹

- Seventh child, daughter Matilda Rebecca Coombes, was born on the 8th of September 1842. ³⁰

From Rebecca's first U.S. Census enrollment in 1850 her birth location was always given as "Texas". It therefore appears that this new baby girl was born after the Coombes' emigrant family had crossed the Red River into Texas. On today's *FindAGrave* website, the Texas birthplace of this new infant is stated as having been Dallas County, Texas ³¹ although this 1842 birth date would then cause serious Dallas history problems – it's too early. The honor of being "first white child" born in whatever-place has been a popular topic in Dallas newspapers since the 1880s. For many years John Neely Bryan Jr. was esteemed in print as having been "first white child" born in Dallas -- he had been born in 1845. ³² Judge W.N. Coombes, giving interviews for *The Dallas Morning News* about his Coombes family history, never mentioned the possibility of his aunt being the "first white child", with her 1842 birth. It is perhaps remotely conceivable that with his father's friendly ties with Indians, as will be explained later, he considered the question of "first white child" an unfair racial stigmatization of Indians; but, at any rate, Judge Coombes never suggests that his aunt Rebecca might have been born in Dallas. In his 1887 first history of Dallas, John Henry Brown includes daughter Rebecca on his list of William Coombes' family members arriving to Dallas in 1843; ³³ but when considering the question of "first child born in Dallas County", John Henry Brown names someone else, an 1843 birth. ³⁴ Historians have recently pinned this "first white child born in Dallas" designation onto Louis Morris Gilbert, a son of Mabel and Charity Gilbert born on the 18th of July 1842. ³⁵

At the end of 1842, while William Coombes was camped at Clarksville, he would doubtless have heard about the Battle of Village Creek, a surprise attack staged on the 24th of May 1841 by White Settlers against a string of Indian tribes camped together along Village Creek in what-is-now Tarrant County. To us, it is now apparent that the Battle of Village Creek pre-empted Indian warfare from the Dallas area, but to the Coombes family, it probably seemed like they soon were going to move into a region where they might be in danger of Indian attack. The Republic of Texas was negotiating with Indian leaders, but the "Treaty of Bird's Fort" wasn't agreed upon until 29th September 1843. Bands of Indians continued to roam through Dallas County. The U.S. Calvary post at Fort Worth wasn't established until 1849. The Coombes family was at the edge of wild frontier.

"The following year some the members of the Red River County settlement made a trip out this way, upon their return gave such glowing account of the country that some of the Kentuckians, including my grandfather decided to make the move", Judge Coombes recalled. ³⁶ The ox-drawn journey to Dallas took four months because the East Fork of the Trinity River was in flood stage. ³⁷ "There were few settlers in this part of the country when my grandfather, William Coombes, arrived at the Three Forks in March, 1843" grandson Judge Coombes recalled. ³⁸ That March arrival date is not corroborated elsewhere. The Supreme Court of the State of Texas, in its decision on the appeal of "Good v. Coombs" in December of 1866, stated that William Coombes established his new Texas homestead in October of 1843, quoting a statement by his attorney ³⁹. A few pages later the same report also dated the establishment of the Coombes homestead as having occurred in November of 1843, quoting a statement by the attorney representing his first wife's heirs. ⁴⁰ John Henry Brown's *History of Dallas* (1887) gives only year 1843 as the date of the Coombes' arrival. ⁴¹ But, it's possible that both the March and October/November dates are correct. Arriving on the east

side of the Trinity in March is one thing, while the Coombes clan might have delayed for months before taking their wagons across the river. Without other sources, we have no better date for the arrival of William Coombes.

The landscape of Dallas is very different today from what William Coombes would have seen when he arrived in 1843. "Grandfather told me that those early days the Trinity River ran bank full, was clear as crystal, and was swarming with fish on the alert for any kind of bait." ⁴² John Neely Bryan's cabin, still virtually alone, stood on a bluff just above the Trinity River. Extending for more than a mile to the east and west was a dense wide forest, following the course of the river. "In the early days the river bottoms were piled up with logs and treetops, the accumulations of ages, and anything like a big rain would made a flood in the river. Later on the county dynamited the drift piles, which broke up the dens of wolves, wildcats and rattlesnakes, and gave the water a chance to run off." "At that time and for many years thereafter, deer, turkeys and prairie chickens, mixed with the wild cattle and horses. The oak woods of Cedar Mountain were peopled with razorback hogs, which made the finest bacon in the world, all the streams were full of fish, and, even in my time it was nothing to hear in the dead of night the scream of the panther and the howling of the wolves." ⁴³ "The Indians hereabouts told the pioneers of a great flood in the Trinity in 1833, when the water covered the land from the hills in Oak Cliff to the post office building at Commerce and Ervay streets in Dallas." ⁴⁴ An 1852 map of the Peters Colony shows that pioneer era forest extending west of today's Beckley Avenue. ⁴⁵ Today, the hills of Kessler Park and Western Heights are covered with trees while the Trinity River floodplain and downtown Dallas are almost treeless: it was exactly opposite when William Coombes arrived. Along the water drainage channels were trees. The floodplain of the Trinity River was a continuous forest several miles wide. Most everything beyond was covered with prairie grass, with only narrow corridors of trees along creeks. I believe the Indians had been "burning the prairies" to attract bison herds. Only the drainage-beds were moist enough for trees to survive those vast frequent prairie fires.

"Grandfather had his eye on a section of prairie land south of the section he took, but he had to stop a week to wait for East Fork to run down to fordable stage for his oxen and George L. Leonard who was driving mules, beat him across the river to the coveted section." ⁴⁶ This makes little sense. Stuck waiting out a flood on the far side of the East Fork of the Trinity River while this particular vacant site William Coombes supposedly already knew that he preferred was 25 miles away? Most of the Peters Colony's free land was west of John Neely Bryan's Dallas and perhaps members of the William Coombes party had already come down from their camp at Clarksville, crossed the Trinity River, and looked around the area we now call Oak Cliff. Or, perhaps this story confuses the crossing of the East Fork with the equally risky crossing of the main channel of the Trinity River at Dallas. Anyway, the story tells us that George L. Leonard and his family got their wagons across the forested Trinity River bottoms before William Coombes did – perhaps the first wagons ever. In the two other Adair articles, Judge Coombes' recollections focus instead on William Coombes' initial contact with Mabel Gilbert – which makes more sense. "He found John Neely Bryan's cabin on the banks of the river, and, crossing the river on a rude raft, made his way to the cabin of Dr. Gilbert ..." ⁴⁷

4: MABEL GILBERT AND WILLIAM COOMBES' CABIN

History has always credited Mabel Gilbert (1797-1870) and his wife Charity (Morris) Gilbert (1800-1854) as being the first White Settlers to join John Neely Bryan as permanent residents in his proposed new city on banks of the Trinity River. A great deal has been written about the Gilberts – how they floated downstream to Bryan's site from Bird's Fort in the spring 1842; how their son Louis Morris Gilbert became the first child born in the new city; how they were the first to cross the Trinity River to claim land on the west side. But there are still questions about the Gilbert's short time in Dallas. Did they build a cabin on the west side of the River? Exactly where did they claim land? Exactly when did they leave? W.S. Adair's interviews with Judge W.C. Coombes help answer some of these questions.

In Adair's 1928 article in *The Dallas Morning News*, Judge Coombes described how his grandfather found John Neely Bryan's cabin, crossed the Trinity River and went to: "the cabin of Dr. Gilbert on Gilbert Creek, near the present site of West Dallas, Dr. Gilbert owned, in addition to his land claim, a gun, a dog and a pony; and his wife on her part, owned a skillet, a frying pan and a parrot. Grandfather bought Dr. Gilbert's claim and the doctor and his wife with their movables came to the east side of the river. By way of making good his claim, and of identifying himself more intimately with the locality, grandfather changed the name of Gilbert Creek to Coombes Creek, and Coombes Creek it has remained to this day. ""⁴⁸. ""Mr. Gilbert was leaving and grandfather bought his cabin."" , Judge Coombes stated in the 1925 interview.⁴⁹.

By the way, Judge Coombes' use of "Dr." as a title for Mabel Gilbert is purely an honorarium. Gilbert is typically known for being a former professional Mississippi river-boat captain, therefore sometimes he is called "Captain Gilbert". He also had presided over a Texas judicial court; so, is occasionally called "Judge Gilbert". He's no more of a medical doctor, or academic PhD, than any other frontier settler.

In his third article with Judge Coombes' family recollections, W.S. Adair never mentions Mabel Gilbert at all. In this 1931 version William Coombes builds his own cabin, the first in West Dallas. I rather prefer the 1925 and 1928 versions – that William Coombes "bought" the Gilberts' claim and moved his family into a cabin the Gilberts had already erected -- perhaps enlarging it.

One might first tend to imagine that, with any place on the west side of the Trinity River being available, the Gilberts would have established their new homestead claim directly across the river, close to Bryan's; but instead they located their cabin more than two miles to the west. The Gilberts apparently had cabins on both sides of the Trinity River. It must be understood that there were many additional background people moving through the frontier then, though we now tend to read about only a few principals. The Gilberts had adult children and siblings. Both these Gilbert cabins would have been useful and used. Their site selection on the west side seems to have involved: avoiding floods, being close to the new Republic of Texas "Military Road", and having long clear views.

The Trinity River's enormous flood spreads have always been a problem for Dallas. Judge Coombes recalled the Indians describing an 1833 flood -- its scale is staggering. The street elevation of its eastern high-water point, the intersection of modern Commerce and Ervay Streets, is at 437 feet above sea level. That would put the top of the 1833 flood five feet above Bryan's courthouse square (site of today's "Old Red") – seven feet above the top of today's earthen levee at West Commerce Street – a flood that would have reached westward almost to the intersection of

modern Sylvan Avenue at Fort Worth Avenue (just below the cliff where the Belmont Hotel was built in the 1940s). The wide dense forest along the Trinity River, tangled with centuries of fallen dead trees, must have formed a sort of gigantic natural beaver dam, impeding drainage of flood waters. Even if the Indians' story had never been true, the early White Settlers who heard it would have been cautious. So, the Gilberts climbed up the escarpment on the west side of the Trinity floodplain to build their cabin on a site safely above any such inundation. A.C. Greene mentioned that the Gilberts farmed a site near the modern intersection of West Commerce and Riverfront;⁵⁰ but there is also a report of the Gilbert's garden being spoiled by flood.

Secondly, Gilbert's cabin site was close to key travel paths. In 1840 the Republic of Texas commissioned Colonel William Cooke to survey and establish a new highway from Austin to the Red River – the "Military Road". This first official highway of the region approached the Trinity River along the ridgeline between the Trinity River and Mountain Creek -- passing through today's southwest Oak Cliff. The Military Road turns eastward, goes down into the floodplain and then turns north. It crosses the Trinity River (along roughly the path of modern Sylvan) to a proposed fort near Cedar Springs, then proceeds northward along another ridgeline between the Elm Fork and Turtle Creek. This wide prairie trail -- only general in its specific route --- must have quickly taken on two different versions as it approached the Trinity River. One version curved along the north side of what-today-we-call Coombes Creek – along the route of today's Fort Worth Avenue through the natural notch where Fort Worth Avenue descends to Sylvan; and a second version ran along the south side of Coombes Creek, similarly along the wide prairie ridgeline to where the "Rock Lodge" was later built --just northeast of modern Cedar Hill Avenue and Evergreen Avenue. That southern version could either cross the floodplain north to Cedar Springs or aim a pathway eastward toward the better Trinity River ford at John Neely Bryan's new town site. This local southern variation of the Military Road route passed an important natural water flow we now call Kidd Springs. The cabin that William Coombes acquired from Mabel Gilbert is located on a highpoint just north of the first purer ridge route of the Military Highway, on the north side of the creek – on today's map, a location between Neal and Montclair streets, north of Fort Worth Avenue and just south of Castle street (32°45'01"N, 96°50'43" W). The Gilbert cabin was sited close to the Military Road coming up from Austin to Bryan's new town called Dallas. These important "Military Road" pathways disappeared long ago, and today can only be imagined.

And thirdly, Mabel Gilbert's cabin was located so that it had good views. To the east, from his cabin Gilbert had a carefully aligned view generally along the Military Road going east, through the notch where Fort Worth Avenue has always descended to the Trinity River bottoms, then out across the floodplain to the bluff where John Neely Bryan's cabin was located. Bryan could stand at his cabin door across the Trinity River two miles away, and see smoke curling up from Gilbert's cabin's fireplace -- evidence that all was well on the western frontier. Gilbert's cabin also had an open view to the west, across broad treeless prairie stretching upward for about a mile. Looking south from his cabin, Gilbert had a view across treetops along the creek, across today's Kessler Park addition (then grassy hills) to Kidd Springs. He can see anyone moving along either version of the new Military Highway – on either side of the creek. And finally he has what must have been a most beautiful view up the valley of Coombes Creek, a long vista across what is today's beautiful Stevens Park golf course. Blocked now by trees and buildings, these views today can only be imagined using topological maps.

In his 1925 column W.S. Adair quotes Judge Coombes saying: "'The first people who came to Texas settled in the timber, along the streams. They did not cultivate much land, and they found it easier to make a clearing in the woods and to fence than to fence and break the prairie, for which

they had neither timber nor plows. In fact, but for barbed wire I cannot conceive how the prairie lands of Texas could ever have been put in cultivation. Thus the timber lands were taken up long before anybody settled on the prairie."⁵¹ Perhaps Judge Coombes heard this from other early settlers; but, in fact, his grandfather's cabin and other earliest pioneer cabins in this north Oak Cliff district were not built in the timber but were erected on open prairie. Where there were trees, there were likely to be floods. Indians could sneak up through the trees. The earliest cabins: Mabel Gilbert's which became William Coombes'; Aaron Overton's (on the southwest corner of Evergreen and Cedar Hill); Caswell Overton's which became William Myers' (either near today's Temple and Windomere, or on the hilltop above Argonne between Montclair and Lausanne); and an earlier E.C. Thomas cabin which became John Merrifield's (east side of Hampton Road at Wentworth) were all built on open prairie sites. The earliest White Settlers might have planted their crops in the woodlands, but their cabins were built on prairies along the Republic of Texas' Military Road.

When Mabel Gilbert's family established their first settlement west of the Trinity River, they named the local creek "Gilbert Creek" and a big local spring they called "Gilbert Springs". Judge Coombes explained how his grandfather changed the name of the creek to "Coombes Creek". The Gilbert name, however, occasionally lingered. Years later it's seen on maps and in a real estate deed as late as 1875, being called "Gilbert's Branch". The name changed from Gilbert Springs to Kidd Springs when "Captain Kidd" bought the site for an amusement park during the 1870s.

Previously this article mentioned that Judge Coombes recalled that his grandfather's emigration caravan from Kentucky reached Dallas in March 1843; while the 1866 decision of The Supreme Court of the State of Texas, quoted attorney statements dating William Coombes settlement on his new land in Dallas to October or November of that year. It's possible that the Gilberts wanted to wait for their crops to be harvested before leaving. Our information is sparse and uncertain.

Though I have searched, I have never found a document citing any sort of boundary description for any land the Gilberts claimed in what-later-became Dallas County. It makes sense that William Coombes would have paid Gilbert for his cabin and his claim, but no record of this purchase transaction is known to exist today -- neither in Robertson County or Dallas County deed records, nor in the records of the General Land Office in Austin. William Coombes did not file his claim for a land grant through the Peters Colony until year 1847. At that point his boundaries were described by the Peters Colony survey system -- specifying numbers for each Section, Township, and Range. A big unanswered question of early Dallas County history is: when had surveyors staked the corner pins of that survey grid in western Dallas County? It's doubtful if Gilbert's claim would have referred to those survey lines. When and how were Coombes' boundaries shifted to fit the Peters Colony's grid geometry is unknown. The arbitrary squares created by the Peters Colony Survey system did not fit well to the topography of William Coombe's hilltop, so his square mile land grant area became special, composed of two adjoining half-sections.

One of the strongest bits of the evidence assuring us that Judge Coombes' stories are truthful in relating the Coombes with the Gilberts are his remarks about a parrot. "Dr. Gilbert owned, in addition to his land claim, a gun, a dog and a pony; and his wife on her part, owned a skillet, a frying pan and a parrot" Judge Coombes is quoted as saying in 1928.⁵² Then in 1931, Adair quotes Judge Coombes saying, "Grandfather had, besides his oxen and wagon, a pony, a gun and a dog, an my grandmother, a parrot, a cat and a frying pan." "⁵³ It sounds as if the Coombes in 1843 had bought the Gilbert's parrot, in addition to their cabin and land claim. Sixty years later, A.C. Greene in his history articles about the Gilberts makes a big deal about "Jocko" (or "Jackoo"), the parrot that Charity Gilbert brought with her to Bryan's new town site. Greene thinks that John Neely

Bryan picked the Gilberts' to name his new town and that they named it in honor of their friend U.S. Naval Commodore Alexander J. Dallas. Jocko the parrot had been a gift from Commodore Dallas.⁵⁴ I don't find any instance where a parrot is ever mentioned in the publicly circulated stories about Mabel Gilbert before 1928, when Judge Coombes mentioned this most historic bird in print for the first time.

The dates and order of arrival of the various first White Settlers on the west side of the Trinity River seems presently to be a topic of considerable confusion. To better facilitate further research about the early White Settlement in what-is-now Oak Cliff, here is the information given by Judge Coombes. In 1925, the Adair columns quotes him saying, " '... my grandfather's family was the third to settle west of the river. The other two were those of George Leonard and Mr. Gilbert.' " ⁵⁵. In the 1928 article there's a slightly different version: "When grandfather came there were three settlers west of the river besides Dr. Gilbert. There were George L. Leonard, John W. Wright, and Mr. Graham." ⁵⁶. Judge Coombes also mentions these other west-side settlers, apparently arriving later: W.M. Leonard, his sister Elizabeth Robertson, John W. Wright, William Myers, J.W. Gill, W.H. Hord, Jim Robinson. E.C. Thomas, W.M. Conover, and J.P. Cole. Judge Coombes' uncles, Levin Green Coombes (1823-?) and Isaac N. Coombes (1825-1854) came from Kentucky to Texas with their father, William Nelson Coombes (1803-1867). Both L.G. and Isaac claim, and are each eventually granted, one square mile of land on the west side of the Trinity River, but neither locates their claim immediately adjacent to their parents', nor to each other's. Other Coombes children are too young to claim under Texas land grant law of that time.

"In February, 1844 E.B. Ely, agent for the Peters Colony investors, wrote about the Trinity River settlers for a newspaper published in Clarksville, Texas: '*On examination, I found about 160 families embrace and actually settled with the colony and distributed as follows: West of the Trinity River in Leonard and Coombes neighborhood, thirty families.*' " ⁵⁷.

5: THE BOIS D'ARC CORRAL

"Buffaloes grazed in big herds at Grand Prairie and in other open grassy places, but did not go about the timber much. But they were shy creatures and, with good reason, soon left a region in which settlers began to appear", ⁵⁸. Judge Coombes recalled in Adair's 1928 history column. There is an early Dallas County history where White Settler pioneers were alarmed by Indians setting fire to the prairies, thinking it was an attempt to "burn them out". What I can more readily imagine is that the Indians were setting fire to the prairie because that was their traditional way to preserve the bison herds in their area – attracting the herds with fresher green grasses sprouting after the fires.

"The chief objection settlers had to Indians as neighbors was they would steal horses. They got all the horses grandfather had three different times. In fact horses were so hard to keep that most of the settlers used oxen exclusively. On one occasion the settlers went in pursuit of the Indians. They followed them as far as the Cross Timbers, where Indian signs became so thick that the settlers decided that it would be well to turn back. But in those early days the Indians did not murder settlers." ⁵⁹. "After that grandfather enclosed with a bois d'arc hedge a corral for his stock, with his cabin in the middle of it. But the Indians came back no more, and it was never demonstrated in his case whether Comanches could break through bois d'arc entanglements. Parts of the old hedge are still to be seen, but they give no hint of how they happen to be growing there." ⁶⁰.

Around the time when Judge Coombes told of remnants of his grandfather's bois d'arc corral still being visible, the first aerial photographs of the site were made. In those photographs, and in the deed records, we see the exact location for most of that naturally prickly corral fence, with one long straight bois d'arc hedge running along what is now Montclair, another along what is now Neal Street, a northern line segment running south of today's Bradley and the southern end presumably being a hedge just north of the Fort Worth Avenue, by then missing. This corral was big -- enclosing about three acres. Its four straight sides formed a trapezoid. The Coombes cabin stood inside, centered toward the north end. It is uncertain exactly when William Coombes and his son Zachariah Ellis Coombes planted this thorny fence. It is also uncertain where they placed gates. Today William Coombes' bois d'arc corral is completely gone. Deed records describe lines where these and other such bois d'arc hedges had been planted on the William Coombes' Headright Survey. Barbed wire didn't become available for fencing until the 1880s and there were similar bois d'arc hedgerows planted far across the prairies of southwest Oak Cliff, and elsewhere in Dallas County.

Before he left Kentucky, William Coombes had owned 18 horses. ⁶¹. In Texas, prior to 1850 William is taxed for owning no more than three horses – he's tired of bad Indians raiding his homestead and stealing them. Later he again kept more. In the tax rolls of 1855 William, agent for wife Rachel A. Coombes, owned 12 horses and 58 head of cattle. In 1866, the year before William's death, Rachel A. Coombes was assessed for 9 horses, 35 head of cattle, and 90 sheep. During his early years in Dallas County, the 1845 tax rolls William Coombes had been assessed for 16 head of cattle ⁶² -- they wouldn't run off nearly as far as the horses did.

6: THREE WILLIAM COOMBES GRIST MILLS

Judge W.N. Coombes recalled, "The first year grandfather planted a patch of corn on Coombes Creek and without the trouble of making a fence, made a good yield. He hauled the corn all the way to Clarksville to get it ground. The next year, however, the mill at Cedar Springs was built and put in operation. In 1845 grandfather erected a treadmill, in what is now Edgefield addition. The mill stood, as an abandoned building, till about 1870. A little later Aaron Overton erected a mill at Kidd Springs, running it with water supplied by a big spring that gushed out of the ground at Tenth and Clinton streets. The next year the spring went bone-dry and the mill stopped."⁶³ (The "Edgefield addition" is a subdivision technically north of today's Singleton Boulevard, at Crossman Avenue, north of William Coombe's square mile of land; but, it is possible that Judge Coombes was trying to specify an otherwise nameless area of his grandfather's land north of the railroad tracks.)

Another *Dallas Morning News* article earlier had claimed a different first grist mill in Dallas County -- close to William Coombes' cabin: "Another noted place was the old mill of Aaron Overton, just northwest of Col. Stemmons' house. It was the first mill established in the county. It was a horse mill. I believe it was altered afterward so that it worked with a tread wheel. There the pioneers went to get their wheat and corn ground -- a great improvement on the old Armstrong steel mill in use before. This mill charged the quarter toll, and you had to future your own team to grind. The way we managed that was for several to go in, or as people would say now, pool, and I would furnish a team to help someone else and they would return the favor. It would sometimes take several days waiting for a turn to come, so scarce were mills in the country. Sometimes there were twenty or more wagons waiting for their turn. The mill was run by an old negro man, owned by Overton, named Cato."⁶⁴ It is not clear exactly where this location had been. At first, I thought it had been up on Overton's survey, close to the Rock Lodge, but if Colonel Stemmons' house had been at what is now the southeast corner of Greenbriar and Beckley, then this mill might have been where today's Coombes Creek tunnels underneath Beckley -- along the inner version of the Military Highway as it came down the escarpment heading toward the Commerce Street ford at Dallas. This seems to be different, and to have preceded, another grist mill Aaron Overton had, powered by water, which Judge Coombes mentioned. These latter two sites are neight on Aaron Overton's land.

The attribution of "first grist mill" gets confusing. I also found the following claims: (1) Trinity Mills of Carrollton claims to have started operation as a horse powered grist mill in 1842.⁶⁵ (2) "Amon McCommas (1804-1877) ... came to Texas in December 1844 ... credited with preaching the first sermon in Dallas County. ... chaired the meeting that formed Dallas County ... elected first Chief Justice of the Dallas County Commissioner's Court ... owned the first 'tread-mill' (grist mill powered by mules) in Dallas."⁶⁶ (3) A Farmers Branch history states: "'The Rev. William Bowles, a Baptist minister, started a blacksmith shop and gristmill in 1845."⁶⁷

At some point in time after his second marriage in October 1848, William Coombes borrowed money to build his second mill, located on the southeast corner of his square mile.⁶⁸ It was constructed by his second wife's father, John McDowell, a millwright.⁶⁹ And there is another Coombes' mill: "' In 1855 grandfather and my uncle, L.G. Coombes built a steam mill in the bend of the river, due north of Cement City. It was a grist mill and sawmill combined. But there was a steam mill in operation at Cedar Springs at an earlier date.' "⁷⁰ The town of Eagle Ford was near this third Coombes' grist mill. In 1857 Jacob Horton established a grist mill at Eagle Ford -- an important hub for the local community.⁷¹ Altogether William Coombes erected three separate grist mills. The exact sites, housing, and mechanical configurations of these early mills are uncertain. Also uncertain is how long each of these mills remained operational.

7: THE LIFE OF WILLIAM COOMBES IN THE 1840S

William Coombes had moved to the Republic of Texas in 184. In April of 1844 a treaty with the United States started the legal process resulting in Texas being ratified as a new state in late December of 1845. Texas formally joined the union of the United States of America in February of 1846. Mexico had never accepted Texas independence. War between the U.S.A. and Mexico began in April of 1846. "'All the settlers of fighting age took part in the war with Mexico in 1845. My uncle, Isaac N. Coombes, was a Lieutenant. His commission, signed by Anson Jones, then president of the Republic of Texas, is still in the keeping of his descendants in Dallas.'" ⁷². In 1937 this commission document was transferred into the possession of Judge Coombes. ⁷³.

The new frontier life was apparently hard on motherhood for William Coombes' wife, Ivy (Green) Coombes. There are reports of two unnamed infant deaths at her new homestead – one in 1845, another in 1846 ⁷⁴; while another version says that these two new Coombes babies had been twin boys. ⁷⁵ There is also a report of the birth of William Ivy Coombes on the 17th of June 1847 ⁷⁶, which quickly ended as an infant death. A couple of weeks later, on the 6th of July 1847, mother Ivy (Green) Coombes died in Dallas. ⁷⁷ She was forty-two years old. *Dallas Times Herald* reporter Bill Porterfield, writing in 1985 about the Western Heights Cemetery on Fort Worth Avenue, stated, "We know that old Man Coomb's first wife is buried there with a stillborn daughter." ⁷⁸. Facts are vague and conflicting. None of these burials are now marked. Most likely these deaths each resulted in a new burial on William Coombes' land – presumably in what-is-now the northeast corner of Western Heights Cemetery. Comments about all the possible unmarked Coombes family related graves in it will appear in a separate article. Other than the un-sourced assertion that Ivy Coombes had died giving birth, we know nothing about the causes of any of these Coombes family deaths in Dallas. Ivy (Green) Coombes died intestate, leaving no written Last Will & Testament.

Just before she died, Ivy (Green) Coombes and William Nelson Coombes had been awarded a Certificate for one square mile of Texas land – a "Special" Certificate signed by Henry O. Hedgecoxe, agent for the Peters Colony, dated on the 10th of May, 1847. ⁷⁹ In order to comply with laws for land grants, immigrants were supposed to have lived on their land for three years. While William Coombes always maintained that he had taken possession of his claim in year 1843, no Certificate was issued in 1846; but, as was strangely normal in this district, such important documentation of land claims lingered – in this case, for another half year or so. The location of the claim's land is specified in this Certificate by the Section numbers, Township, and Range locations of the Peters Colony land survey system. Though by the time of the Coombes 1847 Certificate the stakes had apparently already been set at the corners of Coombes' land, we presently do not know exactly when, or by whom, that important survey had been conducted. William Coombes' ownership right to this full square mile of land was shared with his wife, Ivy (Green) Coombes; but after her death the question of inheritance due to her children was left unsettled.

On the 14th of May 1848, William's eighteen year old son Isaac Nelson Coombes married Berilla Kemper Myers (1831-1877), a sixteen year old daughter of William's southern neighbors, William and Mary Myers. ⁸⁰.

On the 28th of September 1848, a bit more than a year after his first wife's death, William N. Coombes married for a second time, to Rachel Ann McDowell -- seventeen years old. Their marriage was performed by County Judge William H. Hord. ⁸¹ Rachel had been born in Missouri on the 10th of September 1831 ⁸² and had moved to Texas with her widower father, John McDowell, a millwright who would later be hired by William Coombes to help construct his second

grist mill. There are two 320 acre headright surveys in Dallas County bearing John McDowell's name; one is located east of today's Preston Road, extending one mile east, and running half a mile north of today's Northwest Highway; and a second dubbed "heirs of John McDowell" running one mile east of Beckley Avenue, and one-half mile north of Illinois. Rachel was beautiful but illiterate, signing legal documents with only "her mark".⁸³ She was also consciously trading her beauty and her vow of marriage for control of William's wealth. The Texas Supreme Court noted: "In October, 1848, the widower, William Coombs consoled himself by marrying Rachel McDowell, a 'young lady' who demanded 'boot' for exchanging her charms for an old man, the father of half a dozen children, and a little embarrassed in fortune. The fond lover agreed to pay her \$500 ..." ⁸⁴. With Rachel as his new partner, William Coombes eventually has half a dozen more new baby children.

A few months later, on the 31st of January 1849, William's nineteen year old daughter, Margaret Adda Coombes, married 23 year old Thomas A. Campbell (1824 - ?). Their marriage ceremony was performed by Meredith Myers, as a Minister of the Gospel. ⁸⁵ Meredith Myers was a son of William Coombes' neighbors on the south, William and Mary Myers. The Myers families were members of the Five Mile Baptist Church. Meredith Myers was the brother-in-law of Margaret Adda Coombes' older brother Isaac.

Meanwhile, Seymore Stone had not forgotten that William Coombes had abruptly left Kentucky still owing him a substantial sum of debt. Stone hired Texas attorney Jacob Eliot as his agent to collect the long overdue money. Eliot inquired with a neighbor about Coombes' economic situation, and was informed that William would likely be able to pay. In March of 1849 Eliot contacted William about the money owed for the seven \$500 promissory notes he had signed in Kentucky nine years earlier. ⁸⁶ Dispute over this reawakened debt continued for the next eighteen years – ending in lawsuit ultimately decided at the Texas Supreme Court. The gyrations of William Coombes, trying to avoid payment, and the tactics of Stone's agents, trying to collect, became intricate and seem confusing – the fine legal distinctions argued in the Court case are difficult to grasp. Trying to explain this lawsuit, the Texas Supreme Court filled more than seventeen printed pages. This article will not attempt to explain the various legal distinctions raised in this dispute, nor justify the Courts' decision, but will attempt to show how this ongoing dispute impacted the future of William Coombes' square mile of land.

The Court later noted that the seven 1840 promissory notes "seem all to have been barred by the Teas statute about contracts 'grounded in writing,' except two. For this, or some other reason, negotiations were had, which resulted in Coombs executing to Stone four new notes, dated the 31st of March, 1849, each for \$234, due at one, two, three, and four years. This arrangement with Eliot was subject to the approval of Stone, so that Eliot held both sets of notes, the one or the other set to be surrendered according to Stone's decision ..." ⁸⁷. But Eliot was not quick to report back to Stone, instead: "The state of facts represents that 'it was year or two before Eliot (the agent) consulted Stone, and a year or two after that he sent the seven old notes to the said William Coombs ...'." ⁸⁸.

William Coombes then consulted with his attorney neighbor, John M. Crockett, whose homestead was nearby -- at the site of today's Methodist Hospital. Less than six weeks after signing the new promissory notes to Seymore Stone, William Myers sold his square mile of land, its claim for patent of ownership still pending with the State of Texas, to his son Isaac. The deed of sale was filed by attorney Crockett, as a Deputy to the Dallas County Clerk, on the day it was signed; and the

filing was accompanied by two further affidavits – one a declaration signed by John McDowell, the father of William Coombes' new wife, Rachel Ann (McDowell) Coombes, stating that certain assets were delivered to his daughter as property separate from her husband's; and an affidavit signed with the mark of Rachel Coombes asserting that as wife of William Coombes she held separate ownership right to the land William's deed claimed to have sold – that she was not party to the sales transaction. Attorney John M. Crockett attested "her mark" and filed the two affidavits into County deed records along with the deed whereby William sold his square mile to son Isaac.⁸⁹ The deed said that Isaac paid \$1,000 for the square mile of land and acknowledged that William had received full payment for that price. Later it turned out that William had actually only received \$100 cash, plus he had released \$250 worth of old indebtedness Isaac had previously owed to him. Only \$350 had actually been paid. When called to testify in Court about this, William said the full consideration for the land had been paid to him by Isaac, and that Isaac knew all about his father's indebtedness to Seymore Stone at the time he paid for the land transfer.⁹⁰

It looks as if William Coombes had been trying to avoid having his property confiscated to pay his debt to Seymore Stone. This was later alleged in Court. Hiding assets to avoid lawfully due payments can be regarded as "fraud" -- the deed of sale to Isaac could have been declared unlawful and void. Though the Texas Supreme Court later agreed that the facts of this land sale did indeed appear to be suspicious, there were nevertheless legal criteria required to establish "fraud" in Court, and that the plaintiff's plea against William Coombes had failed to present evidence proving that those stipulations had all been met. The District Court decided, and the Supreme Court agreed, that the sale could not be deemed an attempt to defraud Stone out of the money promised to him.⁹¹

Two years later, on the 29th of March, 1850, William Coombes signed a claim with the State of Texas for his 640 acres, promised by the Peters Colony grant. His affidavit was corroborated and witnessed by the signatures of John Neely Bryan and his son Isaac Nelson Coombes.⁹² Awarding of land titles in north Texas was slow – William Coombes doesn't receive a "headright patent of title" to his square mile until 1855, more than a decade after he had made it his homestead.

On the 19th of November 1850, a bit more than two years after son Isaac Coombes had bought his parents' square mile headright land claim, Isaac sold to his step-mother, Rachel Coombes, the southern half of that square mile, including the site of cabin where William and Rachel Coombes continued to live.⁹³ The recorded deed stated that Rachel paid Isaac eight hundred dollars for her half square mile, while the Texas Supreme Court later stated: "Isaac N. Coombs, on the 19th of November 1850 conveyed what he bought to his step-mother, Rachel McDowell Coombs. He said she gave him that same \$500 which the lady received as "boot" and a carriage and some cattle, which her father (McDowell) got for working on the mill."⁹⁴

After signing the new version of the promissory notes to Stone, William Coombes – perhaps after talking to attorney John M. Crockett – decided that he preferred the old notes of indebtedness, for a greater amount due; but, Stone's agent, attorney Jacob Eliot, refused to give the new notes back to William, although Stone had not yet decided whether to keep the old or new versions. There is no record that William Coombes ever paid any more money to Seymore Stone for any of this debt. William Coombes continued to live at his original homestead cabin. There is no record of son Isaac ever living there – he had his own square mile of land, with his own wife and children. It would later be alleged, to no avail, that these deed transactions were frauds, transfers funded by trivial or superficial shuffling of payments, orchestrated merely to prevent Seymore Stone from collecting reimbursement for the funds he had loaned to William. Why William Coombes was refusing to pay Seymore Stone was never explained in the legal proceedings.

8: THE LIFE OF WILLIAM COOMBES IN THE 1850s

The 1850s continues with William Coombes having more children, his first to survive to adulthood after he arrived in Dallas.

- Rachel and William's first birth was Martha Ann Coombes, on 15th of March 1851.⁹⁵

During the first week of year 1852, son Zachariah Ellis (Z.E. Coombes), 19 years old, signs "power of attorney" over his Dallas business affairs to his older brother Isaac N. Coombes⁹⁶, then he leaves for his native Kentucky to attend college⁹⁷ – the first member of William Coombes family, and William's only child, to receive a college education. Unfortunately no record can now be found of exactly which school Z.E. Coombes attended. His grandmother, Hannah (Glover) Coombes was still living in Kentucky, now 82 years old. Z.E. Coombes becomes a member of the Masonic Rite during this college period, joining at the Lodge #57 in his hometown of Bloomfield, Nelson County, Kentucky.⁹⁸ While he and his son William Nelson Coombes (1857-1939) eventually became prominent leaders of their Masonic groups, I find no evidence that William Nelson Coombes (1803-1867) or his other sons by first wife Ivy (Green) Coombes, Isaac N. Coombes or Leven Green Coombes, were ever Masons. I am tempted to imagine that Z.E. Coombes might have attended Shelby College, in Shelbyville, Kentucky – a private college then operated by the Episcopal Diocese, in nearby Shelby County where several cousins lived. I have no record of exactly whether or not Z.E. Coombes graduated, or what sort of diploma he might have received. At any rate, Z.E. Coombes transferred his Masonic membership to Dallas, into the Tannehill Lodge, on July 28, 1855,⁹⁹ He had been away for three and a half years.

During the summer after Z.E. Coombes departure for Kentucky, "the Hedgecox War" erupted in the Peters Colony of north Texas on the 15th of July 1852. Frustrated by Texas land grant policies, a group of angry settlers, led by John Jay Good, rode from Dallas to Collin County where they seized all the records of the Peters Colony (which were later burned). Colony agent Henry O. Hedgecox escaped – fleeing before the mob's arrival. Unlike neighbor William Myers, William Coombes and his family are not remembered as having become entangled in this uprising. John M. Crockett, Coombes' attorney, was an active delegate representing Dallas County in subsequent negotiations working on revisions to Texas land policies.¹⁰⁰

- The second child of William and Rachel Coombes, Octavia Julia Coombes (also cited as: Octavia J.M. Coombes), was born in Dallas on the 11th of April 1853.¹⁰¹

During March of 1854 strange new neighbors bought the square mile land owned by William's oldest son, Levin Green Coombes, and it became the site of La Reunion, a new colony of utopian French socialists. L.G. Coombes' wife Jane H. (Heady) Coombes died sometime during this year 1854. She had given birth to four children during the past decade. It is unknown where L.G. Coombes and his family moved after their homestead had been sold, but his presence is noted in Dallas until at least 1866. Levin Green Coombes remarries in Montague County in 1875.¹⁰²

During this period of time when Z.E. Coombes was away attending college in Kentucky, his older brother and trusted "power of attorney" Isaac Nelson Coombes died in Dallas – on the 9th of July 1854, at the age of thirty. No cause of his death is known, but he signed a one page Last Will & Testament on the date of his death, so his demise must have appeared imminent.¹⁰³ A burial site for Isaac Coombes' grave is unknown.

On the 16th of March 1855, some 22 years after William Coombes had initially arrived in Dallas, the State of Texas finally issued him a "patent of title", making his ownership the beginning – the so-called "headright" – for its future "chain of title". Signed by Texas governor Pease, this land grant included one square mile of land – 640 acres – being two half sections of the Peters Colony survey grid. William Coombes' headright survey consisted of the east half of Section 18, and the west half of the Section 17, in Township 1-South, in Range 1-East.^{104.}

That same month the advance party of La Reunion colonists arrived in Dallas County and started building huge communal buildings in their new town site, located a bit more than half a mile west of William Coombes' cabin – at the location of today's surviving concrete smokestack, left from the cement factory later built there. The next month, April 1855, hundreds of La Reunion colonists arrived from Europe, William and Rachel Coombes' new neighbors.

- John William Coombes was born on the 22nd of July 1855, as the third child for Rachel and William Coombes.^{105.}

On the 5th November, 1855, Seymore Stone's agent, attorney Jacob Eliot, obtained a District Court judgment against William Coombes in the amount of \$895.53 plus costs of suit.^{106.} William Coombes still did not pay his debt. Eleven months later, on the 6th of October, 1856, the Dallas County Sheriff, B.M. Henderson, posted a notice that he intended to auction the southern half square mile of William Coombes survey, minus 200 acres deemed as Coombes "homestead". On the first Tuesday of January 1857, on the courthouse steps, Sheriff Henderson held this auction, and the 120 acres was purchased by a new character in our story, John J. Good.^{107.}

A few weeks before this Sheriff's auction, on the 10th of December, 1856, in Dallas, William's son Zachariah Ellis (Z.E.) Coombes (1833-195) married Rebecca Finch Bedford (1835-1885).^{108.}

- Josephine Bonaparte Coombes, the fourth child of Rachel and William Coombes, was born in Dallas on the 16th of May 1857.^{109.}
- On the 26th of November, 1857, William Nelson Coombes (1857-1939), the first child of Z.E. Coombes (1833-1895) and his wife Rebecca was born in Dallas,^{110.} In his 1939 obituary it was recalled that Judge Coombes had been born "near the West Dallas Cemetery"^{111.} (His birth was probably in the cabin of his grandparents William and Rachel Coombes, just east of the graveyard now called "Western Heights Cemetery").

Meanwhile attorney John J. Good asked William and Rachel Coombes to describe the boundaries that they wanted to keep as their 200 acre "homestead", so that he could then take possession of the remaining 120 acres of their headright survey that he had bought for \$150 at the Sheriff's auction in January 1857. The Coombes did not reply. So, on 1st of January 1858 John J. Good petitioned the District Court asking for partition and possession of his new land.^{112.}

During this time William Coombes was often away from Dallas, running a freight hauling business. Recently married, with a new baby boy, Z.E. Coombes left Dallas and took a position teaching school for Comanche tribal members at the Brazos Indian Reservation in Johnson County, Texas. How he found out about the job is unknown, but it is conjectured that since his father had been hauling supplies to the reservation he may have had prior knowledge about the position. Entries in Zacharias' journal that he kept during that period indicated that at the age of twenty-five, he arrived at the reservation -- sometime during June 1858.^{113.} This article strives to be a biography of William Nelson Coombes, not his son Z.E. Coombes, so the story of this very interesting but tragic episode

in the life of Z.E. Coombes ends here; and although Z.E. Coombes is a most likeable and important character in Dallas history, an account of his life is not going to be fully provided in this article.

Back in the District Court in Dallas, on the 16th of July in this same summer of 1858, the judge in the lawsuit John J. Good had filed against William and Rachel Coombes received a written petition from a new group – the "intervenors" — the children and heirs of Ivy (Green) Coombes, the deceased first wife of William Nelson Coombes. Ivy had died in 1847 but her estate has never been settled. The intervenors, through their attorneys John McCoy and partner Nicholson, claimed ownership right to the land that John J. Good purchased at Sheriff's auction. The intervenors asserted that John J. Good knew about prior deeds where William had sold the square mile and Rachel had bought half of it back.¹¹⁴ Nathaniel Macon Burford, the usual judge of this District Court recused himself from this case, disqualified by having previously given legal advice on this matter, and Special Judge Warren Stone then presided over the courtroom trial, held with no jury during the summer of 1859. Again attorney John M. Crockett represented neighbor William Coombes and his wife Rachel.

It is unfortunate that persistent search for the District Court Minutes could not find official records for this case, and I finally surmised that these valuable historical records had previously been destroyed in one of the three courthouse fires of early Dallas County. In December of 1866, the Texas Supreme Court, in deciding the appeal, tells us what Judge Stone had decided in District Court. "The court rendered judgment generally, that the plaintiff take nothing by his suit and that the defendants recover of him their cost. And further, that the intervenors recover of the defendants and the plaintiff one-half of the entire section of land, and of the plaintiff all their costs. The plaintiff moved for a new trial, because the judgment was contrary to the law and the evidence. The motion was overruled, and the plaintiff appealed."¹¹⁵

9: THE LIFE OF WILLIAM COOMBES IN THE 1860S

- Samuel Houston Coombes, fifth child of William and Rachel, was born on the 15th of August 1860; ¹¹⁶ and last child Sarah ("Sallie") Coombes, was born on the 16th of September 1862. ¹¹⁷

When the Civil War finally erupted in April 1861, William Nelson Coombes was 58 years old. His oldest son, Levin Green Coombes was 38. Both were considered "too old" for military service and both were raising children – Levin, at that point, without a wife. Son Zachariah Ellis Coombes was 28 years old, and though he had two young children: "In the spring of 1862 he entered the Confederate Army as a member of Trezevant C. Hawpe's Thirty-first Regiment of Texas Cavalry. He was promoted to lieutenant in April 1863 and to captain of Company G in June of that year." ¹¹⁸ But before the War ended, Z.E. Coombes returned to Dallas, and in 1864 he bought Mr. Lanotte's dwelling in the old town of La Reunion. He taught school there in La Reunion after the War. ¹¹⁹

William Coombes's county tax assessment dropped to \$0 after he sold his land to his son Isaac. Afterwards, it is Rachel Coombes whose name appeared in the Dallas County tax rolls, with William Coombes cited as her "agent". Tax rolls show that after 1860 the Coombes were raising sheep – perhaps a new livestock enterprise copied from their La Reunion neighbors. In year 1864, the household of William and Rachel Coombes was taxed for one slave -- value \$500. William Coombes had not been taxed for slaves since he had lived in Kentucky in the 1840s – presumably he had owned none. Why, with the Civil War grinding toward inevitable defeat for the slave-owning Confederates, the Coombes household had acquired a new slave is unknown. Perhaps it was inherited from some distant relative, or perhaps that slave had been moved west ahead of advancing Union soldiers and sold to the Coombes at a remarkably low price. At any rate, on June 19th of 1865 – a date celebrated now as "*Juneteenth*" – slaves throughout Texas were all freed.

In June 1866 Z.E. Coombes was elected Judge of the Dallas County Commissioners Court. ¹²⁰ In December 1866, eight years after John J. Good's appeal began, the Texas Supreme Court finally issued its ruling, deciding the long-standing case of *John J. Good vs. William Coombes, et al.* At the end of 18 typeset pages explaining its decision, the Supreme Court concluded simply by saying: "Upon the whole, we are of the opinion, that there is no error in the judgment of the court below of which the appellant can justly complain, and that it should be affirmed." ¹²¹ A few months later Z.E. Coombes moved his family into the town of Dallas. ¹²²

Matilda Rebecca Coombes (1842-1880), youngest surviving child of William and first wife Ivy, was married to William Leighton Holt (1844-1920) on the 6th of July 1867 in Dallas. ¹²³ Her father, William Nelson Coombes, died five days later – on the 11th of July 1867. ¹²⁴ I can find no newspaper obituary or published notice of his passing. He died at age 64. Both the exact cause and location of his death are unknown. Since William Coombes had shifted title to assets out of his own name – allegedly to avoid paying his promissory debt to Seymore Stone -- there was no Last Will & Testament filed for him -- no Dallas County probate case settling his estate.

Over the years an often repeated colorful urban-legend arose that William Nelson Coombes' grave had been covered during a widening of Fort Worth Avenue – that his grave is now under the roadbed pavement somewhere near the Western Heights Cemetery. ¹²⁵ But given that there had been multiple earlier Coombes family deaths, with earlier burials known to have been in what-is-now the northeast corner of Western Heights Cemetery, there is no good reason to think that patriarch William Coombes would not have been buried there too – nowhere close to the roadway of Fort Worth Avenue -- though admitted, at this point, we don't really know for sure.

8: DEATH OF RACHEL A. COOMBES

A few weeks after the death of William Coombes, on the 20th of July 1867, General Phil Sheridan, commander of the Reconstruction administration for Texas, removed Texas Governor Throckmorton from office -- the beginning of a state-wide purge of elected officials deemed to be inadequately protecting the rights of former slaves, and other negroes, in Texas.¹²⁶ Z.E. Coombes was removed from his office of Dallas County Judge the following November.¹²⁷

With the lawsuit settling William Coombes' unpaid debt to Seymore Stone having finally been decided by the Texas Supreme Court, and with the death of William Coombes about seven months thereafter, the children and heirs of Ivy (Green) Coombes and Isaac Coombes could finally divide the land left to them as inheritance. There had been a probate settlement for the northern half of the William Coombes Survey square mile -- allocating strips to the children of deceased Isaac Coombes.¹²⁸ The various other family heirs, working with step-mother Rachel Coombes, reached a mutual agreement as to how the southern half square mile would be divided. They talked and agreed among themselves without filing a lawsuit, friendly or adverse, in the courts. Their signed agreement was filed as a county real estate deed. This comprehensive deed of partition was signed in September, 1867 and filed in November. A map of the square mile included in the filing -- showed the nine individual parcels of new ownership for the square mile William Coombes Survey.¹²⁹ Rachel A. Coombes, William's widow, retained 52 acres including her residence (the homestead cabin), an orchard (location now unknown), and the family cemetery.

About three months after this special land partition deed had been filed, on the 11th of February 1868, Rachel A. (McDowell) Coombes, widow of William, placed her "X" on a document which must have been read aloud to her -- her Last Will & Testament. She died about three weeks later, on the 1st of March 1868.¹³⁰ The precise cause of Rachel's death and the location of her burial are now unknown. She had died at age 36, less than a year after the death of her husband William.

All the children born to William and Ivy were now independent adults; but Rachel left six orphan children of her own. The Court accepted a petition made by David S. Harris to become Administrator of Rachel's estate. Harris was the husband of Rachel's niece -- Rachel's parents were both deceased and her brother declined the possible appointment. Rachel's two oldest children, Martha Ann Coombes (1851-1925) and Octavia Julia Coombes (1853 - ?) were placed under the guardianship of Levi M. Bumpas.¹³¹ Martha Ann Coombes, age sixteen, was apparently already becoming engaged with future- husband Francis H. "Frank" Anderson (1846-1924). Rachel's second child, Octavia Julia Coombes (1853-?), age 14, was briefly cared for by Levi Bumpas and his wife, Mary Morton (Coombes) Bumpas, her aunt. Rachel's estate administrator, David Harris, then recommended for guardians of Rachel's four youngest children, the appointment of Barclay (B.M.) and Charlotte Bradford, who had recently moved to Texas from St. Louis, where they had buried both of their own deceased children. The Bradfords moved into the Coombes' cabin, took over the care of the four youngest Coombes' children: John William Coombes-- age 12, Josephine Bonaparte Coombes-- age 11, Samuel Houston Coombes -- age 9, and Sarah ("Sallie") Coombes -- age 5. To support the care of the Coombes' children, the Court gave B.M. Bradford the right to sell Rachel Coombes' assets, and Bradford started selling off small residential sized parcels of Rachel's 52 acres in the William Coombes Survey.¹³²

Charlotte Bradford died on 27th of August 1879 and was buried in the Coombes family cemetery, which her husband then owned.¹³³ By the time of the 1880 Census Barclay M. Bradford was living alone, his foster children all grown and now living independently.

In February of 1881, for the token sum of \$15.00, B.M. Bradford sold two acres including *the old Coombes family graveyard where he had recently buried his wife Charlotte*, to Z.E. Coombes and W.R. Fisher acting as trustees of the local Christian Church, for use as a church building site and cemetery – the bulk of the land now known as Western Heights Cemetery.¹³⁴

Here concludes this history of William Nelson Coombes and his family in Dallas. The lives of his various children are also interesting, but separate from this account. Especially likeable, and widely known in Dallas and Texas history is Z.E. Coombes (1833-1895), who became a professional attorney, practicing in a partnership, ironically enough, with the same John J. Good who had once sued to own a portion of his father's land (the case he lost in a 1866 decision of the Texas Supreme Court).¹³⁵ Someone else will need to compile a complete biography of Z.E. Coombes and the other children of William Coombes.

The history of William and Ivy Coombes' square mile of Dallas County land – the William Coombes headright Survey -- continues as a separate tale of urban expansion. In the 1870s, years after William, Ivy, and Rachel Coombes death, the transcontinental Texas & Pacific Railroad laid its tracks across the northern half of the William Coombes Survey. This account explains why and how the William Coombes Survey got subdivided among various individual heirs of son Isaac N. Coombes and wives Ivy (Green) Coombes and Rachel (McDowell) Coombes. But the arrival of the railroad and the early subdivision of this "West Dallas" area into individual residential parcels was eclipsed in the late 1880s by the overpowering success of the all new Oak Cliff development – development that bypassed the William Coombes Survey.

The original cabin of William Nelson Coombes (1803-1867), reported in the 1920s as having been originally built by the first White Settler pioneers on the west side of the Trinity River – Mabel and Charity Gilbert – is cited in his 1939 obituary as having been the birthplace of Judge William Nelson (1857-1939). The cabin was still standing near the cemetery.¹³⁶ In year 2018, MacArthur & Nicole Davis purchased an old house at 1620 Neal Street, directly across from the Coombes family tombstones in Western Heights Cemetery.¹³⁷ Davis wanted to clear away the old house to build a new one, but discovered that there was an old log cabin encased with the old house. Apparently (possibly) the original log cabin of William Coombes had been moved south about 100 yards and attached to the rear of this frame house – at some point in time after the 1950 Sanborne Insurance map of the area had been drawn. Everything was latter clad in brick veneer. It is said to have been a "dog trot log cabin". Davis asked the architecture school in Arlington for advice, but no one there knew details of the history of this particular neighborhood – for them it was just another old log cabin. The Davises demolished everything and built their new residence. I never saw this cabin, but heard that Davis had taken photographs prior to its demolition; so, in 2019, I wrote to MacArthur & Nicole Davis and to their builders, Chester McGowan Building & Remodeling, requesting information. I never received a reply.

(End of Text)

FOOTNOTES

1. Data from: *FamilySearch.com*; "John W. Luckens Coombs: 1735-1801".
2. From one page of unidentified typewritten manuscript found at: *FindAGrave.com* (May 2025), burial of "John Coombs: 17357-1801", death at Nelson County, Kentucky.
3. Data from: *FamilySearch.com*; "Nelson Coombs: 1771-18351", husband of Hannah Glover.
4. From "Kentucky Society of the American Revolution" found at: *FindAGrave.com* (May 2025), burial of "John Coombs: 17357-1801", death at Nelson County, Kentucky.
5. From one page of unidentified typewritten manuscript found at: *FindAGrave.com* (May 2025), burial of "John Coombs: 17357-1801", death at Nelson County, Kentucky.
6. Data from: *FamilySearch.com*; "John W. Luckens Coombs: 1735-1801".
7. In June 2025, there is nothing on the internet about the ancestry of William N. Coombes' grandmother, Alice Nelson Jolly (1740-1814) except that she had been born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania; but at the Kentucky wilderness Fort Hardin there is a burial for a Nelson Jolly (1741-181) who had also been born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania – likely a brother, or cousin, who in 1780 rafts down the Ohio River with John Coombes' settlement party. *FindAGrave*, for the Hardinsburg, Kentucky burial of this Nelson Jolly, cites his parents as having been Samuel Jolly and Letitia Nelson. Though currently there is no complete genealogical tree linking Alice Nelson (Jolly) Coombes back to a Nelson family of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, it is presumably such; and there seems to be no direct American kinship between that Nelson family and the family of Virginia governor William Nelson (1711-1772) nor to his son Thomas Nelson, Jr. (1738-1789), also a Virginia governor and signer of the Declaration of Independence, in whose honor Nelson County, Kentucky is named.
8. Data from: *FamilySearch.com*; "Hannah Glover: 1770-1856".
9. *The 1790 U.S. Census* separately enrolls the households of Uriah Glover Jr. (1740-1830), Nelson Coombes father-in-law, and the household of Nelson Coombes (1771-1838), as residents of Georges Township, Fayette County, Pennsylvania. It appears that the Nelson Coombes household lists only Nelson and his new wife Hannah, both about age 19. *FamilySearch.com* cites their marriage as having occurred on Long Island, New York in year 1790 – deemed improbable. Similarly, *FamilySearch.com* and *FindAGrave.com* cite the birth of their first child, Lorenzo Amos Coombs (also spelled Lorenzie), as having occurred in year 1788 in Jefferson County, Kentucky (the modern Louisville area) – which is also deemed improbable – it being unlikely that once in Kentucky the Coombes, with an infant child, would have laboriously worked their way back up into the mountains of Pennsylvania along the Ohio River, which their family had floated down on rafts.
10. Data from: *FamilySearch.com*; "Ruth Coombs: 1792-1853". Nelson and Hannah (Glover) Coombes' second child, Ruth, is reportedly born in Nelson County, Kentucky in November of 1792; so it seems reasonable to believe that Nelson and Hannah had joined his father's family in that area by that date – the year of Kentucky statehood. Hannah (Glover) Coombes parents, Uriah and Elizabeth Glover, are cited by *FamilySearch.com* as having also moved to Nelson County, Kentucky, in 1792.
11. Data from: *FamilySearch.com*; "William Nelson Coombes: 1803-1867".
12. At the time of this writing, there is a large webpage titled "*Combs &c. Families of Nelson Co., KY*" (at: www.combs-families.org/combs/records/ky/nelson/.) For year 1823 there are over twenty Coombs adults listed as residing in Nelson County, including two William Coomes.
13. *FamilySearch.com*; *Kentucky County Marriages; 1786-1965*; searched using the name "Ivey Green". The marriage bond is dated 14th October; the marriage ceremony dated 17th October 1822.
14. *FamilySearch.com*; (June 2025): *Walter Stallard (1749-1827)* "...was a pioneer Baptist minister and came from Virginia to Kentucky when Louisville was a mere village... He lived in Bardstown, Nelson, Kentucky, United States in 1810 and Bloomfield, Nelson, Kentucky, United States in 1820. He died on 18 August 1827, in Spencer, Kentucky...."
15. Data from: *FamilySearch.com*; "William Nelson Coombes: 1803-1867"—from his "tree".
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid. (searching "tree" for the parents of Ivy Green Coombes)

18. Ibis. (searching "tree" for the parents of William Nelson Coombes)
19. FamilySearch.com (June 2025); "*Nelson County, Kentucky deeds 1785-1904*", Nelson County, Kentucky: real estate deeds; Vol. 23, Page 253-354; whereby William and Ivy Coombes sell 284+ acres (three tracts) on the 22nd February 1842.
Incidentally, within this deed is mentioned the boundary line of an adjoining tract, the "Wm. Stone line". It is possible the William Coombes' neighbors were the family of William Miller Stone (1774-1812), an uncle of Seymore Stone [whose father was Wm. Stone's brother, James Stone (1748-1813)]. There are numerous Stone family members enrolled along with the numerous Coombes family members listed in the Nelson County, Kentucky tax rolls of the 1820s and 1830s.
20. Data from: *FamilySearch.com*; "William Nelson Coombes: 1803-1867"—from his "tree".
21. FamilySearch.com (June 2025); "*Tax books (Nelson County, Kentucky) 1792-1894*".
22. FamilySearch.com;(June 2025); *Kentucky Marriage records; Spencer County, Kentucky Marriage Bonds; Book 3 (1837-1864)*, page 107.
23. Information about the 1840 loan by Seymore Stone to William Coombes is derived from the Case Note file (PDF version online) of the Supreme Court of the State of Texas, where pages 6-7 of the case notes (page 7-8 of the PDF) are a transcription of a contract between William Coombes and Jacob Eliot, an attorney representing Stone in Texas, dated 21st March 1849.
Information about the 1840 financial status of William Coombes and Seymore Stone is derived from the tax rolls of Nelson County, Kentucky for year 1840. On its page 11 William Cooms is cited as owning 292 acres along Simpsons Creek (value \$8,760), two slaves (\$1,600), 18 horses (\$800), 16 head of cattle (\$450); for a total assessed value of \$11,610. On page 45 Seymore Stone's assessments are: 417 acres on Ash's Creek (\$10,000), 4 slaves (\$1,900), 11 horses (\$400), 15 head of cattle (\$50); for a total of \$12,350 -- altogether 6% greater than William Coombes total assessed value.
Current sources don't provide any exact day for Seymore Stone's birth, reporting only that he, like William Coombes, is born in year 1803.
24. Seymour V. Conner, *The Peters Colony of Texas*; Texas State Historical Association, Austin, 1959 – remains the classic source for information about the program which provided land to William Coombes.
25. "*List of Transcribed Wm. Adair Columns*", from "*Jim Wheat's Dallas County History Archives*", online (June 2025: www.freepages.rootsweb.com/~jwheat/history/adairtoc.html)
26. 1925-07-12; *Dallas Morning News*, Sec. 3, p.2; W.S. Adair, "*Indians on Rampage in Dallas Area*"; 1928-07-01; *Dallas Morning News*, p.8; W.S. Adair, "*Horse Stealing Best Sport of Texas Indians*"; 1931-10-25; *Dallas Morning News*, p.1. W.S. Adair; "*Winter of 1878 Declared Coldest in North Texas*"
27. Same deed cited in Note 19.
28. W.S.Adair newspaper history of 1931, cited in Note 26.
29. W.S.Adair newspaper history of 1925, cited in Note 26.
30. *FamilySearch.com*; (June 225); "Matilda Rebecca Coombes: 1842-1880".
31. *FindAGrave.com*; (June 225); "Maltilda Rebecca Coombes Holt: 1842-unknown". The name is spelled "Matilda" elsewhere, such as the 1850 Census; and this odd rendition is considered a typographical error.
32. 1889-08-11; *Dallas Morning News*: p. 14; "*First Born of Dallas*". But before 1900 a different baby is given precedence by John Henry Brown --1891-06-13; *Dallas Morning News*: p. 4; "*First Child Born in Dallas County*".
33. *The Portal to Texas History*; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/>); book: "*History of Dallas County, Texas: from 1837 to 1887*"; by John Henry Brown, printed in Dallas. (1887). page: 69 of 116.
34. Before 1900 a different baby is given precedence by John Henry Brown --1891-06-13; *Dallas Morning News*: p. 4; "*First Child Born in Dallas County*".
35. 1984-07-06; *Dallas Morning News*, page 19A; A.C. Greene; "*Capt. Mabel Gilbert's Trip*" and also: *FindAGrave.com*: "Louis Morris Gilbert: 1842-1916"
36. W.S.Adair newspaper history of 1931, cited in Note 26.
37. W.S.Adair newspaper history of 1925, cited in Note 26.
38. W.S.Adair newspaper history of 1925, cited in Note 26.
39. 1866, December; *Supreme Court of the State of Texas*; "*Good v. Coombs*", Vol. XXVIII (1869), page 35.

40. Same source cited in Note 39, except on page 39. Furthermore, on page 41 of this case judgment summary, the Plaintiff is quoted as asserting that William Coombes had "settled upon and claimed" his Dallas land on an unspecified date in year 1844.
41. Same source cited in Note 33.
42. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1928, cited in Note 26.
43. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1931, cited in Note 26.
44. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1928, cited in Note 26.
45. <https://7ladders.com/WmMyers/Landscape.htm> ; detail from 1852 "Hedgcox Map" colorized by author.
46. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1931, cited in Note 26.
47. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1928, cited in Note 26.
48. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1928, cited in Note 26.
49. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1925, cited in Note 26.
50. 1984-07-06; *Dallas Morning News*, page 19A; A.C. Greene; "Capt. Mabel Gilbert's Trip".
51. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1925, cited in Note 26.
52. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1931, cited in Note 26.
53. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1931, cited in Note 26.
54. Same A.C. Greene source cited in Note 50;
and also: 1991-November-3rd: *Dallas Morning News*, page 48A; A.C. Greene, "Birthplace of Dallas was really Bird's Fort".
55. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1925, cited in Note 20.
56. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1928, cited in Note 20.
57. This quotation is copied from "The Hidden City: Oak Cliff", Bill Minutaglio & Holly Williams; published by Elmwood Press and The Old Oak Cliff Conservation League, (1990); pp. 14-15, p. 206. with the quotation inside it footnoted: "Connor: The Peters Colony, p. 228."
58. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1928, cited in Note 26.
59. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1928, cited in Note 26.
60. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1925, cited in Note 26.
61. FamilySearch.com (June 2025); "Tax books (Nelson County, Kentucky) 1792-1894".
62. FamilySearch.com (June 2025); "Texas, County Tax Rolls (1837-1910)"; Robertson and Dallas County.
63. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1928, cited in Note 26.
64. 1887-July 21st -- *Dallas Morning News*, page 11, "Early Times in Dallas".
65. 1942-March-15th; *The Dallas Morning News*; T.A. Price, page 10; "Vanished Glory of Trinity Mills Recalled As Town Century Old."
66. https://www.therstorationmovement.com/_states/texas/mccommas.htm (June 2025)
67. <https://www.farmersbranchtx.gov/606/History> (June 2025) -- City of Farmers Branch webpage
68. Same as Note 39, page 37.
69. 1849, May 5th, affidavit by John McDowell, *Dallas District Court*, , Case No. 184 ; *John J. Good vs. Wm. Coombs et al.*; also recorded in: *Supreme Court of State of Texas*, same case; Case Notes folder; also: *Dallas County Real Estate Deed Records*; Vol. B, pages 130-132.
70. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1928, cited in Note 26.
Comment: This 1855 date Judge Coombes cited seems like it might be a year or two too late (to me), because the La Reunion colonists had started purchasing land in March 1854, and this site had been purchased from L.G. Coombes as one of the first parcels they bought. When the Colonists arrived in April of 1855, they brought a steam engine mill's equipment with them, but I suppose it is possible that the Coombes family had set up their own steam mill on the Colony lands.
71. [Wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Dallas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Dallas) (June 2025).
72. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1931, cited in Note 26.
73. 1937-June 25th: *Dallas Morning News*, page 11; "Texas Republic Commission in Possession of Dallasite".
74. Data from: *FamilySearch.com*; (March-May 2025).
75. Data from: coombs-families.org/combs/records.tx.bio/wnc.htm (August 2025).
76. Same as Note 74.

77. Data from: *FindAGrave.com* (March-May 2025).
78. 1985-February-11th; *Dallas Times Herald*; Bill Porterfield; page. A13 "A Family and a Frontier Lost in the American Metropolis".
79. Records of the *General Land Office, State of Texas*, filed under the name of William Coombs.
80. *History of the William Myers Section*, James D. Barnes (2009); Vol. 12, page 85.
81. Data from *Combs-Combs &c.* website, hosted by *USGenNet*, (March 2009) – which cited this information as coming from: *Marriages: Dallas County, Texas*; Volume I, Books A-E (1846 - 1877). edited by Helen Mason Lu and Gwen Blomquist Neumann, Dallas Genealogical Society, 1978.
82. Shankle Family Genealogy; <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/4898/coombs.html> (2009).
83. Dallas County real estate deed records; Vol. B, Page 131 (1849)
84. Same as Note 39., except page 37.
85. Same as note 80.
86. Same as Note 39., except page 42.
87. Same as Note 39., except page 36.
88. Same as Note 39., except page 42.
89. Dallas County real estate deed records; Vol. B, page 130-132; (1849)
90. Same as Note 39., except page 43.
91. Same as Note 39., except page 49.
92. from the records of the *General Land Office, State of Texas*; "File 1371, No. 58- Vol. 1; William Coombs", affirmed and recorded by Thomas William Ward on the 1st day of April 1850.
93. Dallas County real estate deed records; Vol. B, page 488-489.
94. Same as Note 39., except page 37.
95. Data from: *Combs-Combs &c.* website, hosted by *USGenNet*, (copied March 2009).
96. Dallas County real estate deed records; Vol. C, page 11.
97. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1928, cited in Note 26.
98. <https://www.masonsofdallas.org/single-post/2018/10/07/dallas-pioneer-mason-sets-cornerstone-of-texas-capitol> -- 2025.
99. Same as Note 97.
100. Same as Note 24: especially pages: 142, 143, and 147.
101. Same as note 81.
102. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1928, cited in Note 26.
103. Dallas County Probate, #145; *Estate of Isaac N. Coombes*, Case Notes; PDF of microfilm made by the *Dallas Genealogical Society*: Date of death, page 14; Last Will & Testament, page 17 of 21.
104. Dallas County real estate deed records; Vol. F, Page 390-391.
105. Shankle Family Genealogy; <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/4898/coombs.html> (2009).
106. Same as Note 39., except page 38.
107. Dallas County real estate deed records; Vol. E, pages 618-619.
108. Data from internet: combs-families.org/combs/records/tx/bio/zec.htm; on *USGenNet* (2025).
109. Data from: *FamilySearch.com* (March-May 2025).
110. The exact date of the birth of this William N. Coombes is a bit tricky. His tombstone gives his birth as having been on the 26th of November, but its year of 1938 seems wrong. It is believed that 1857 was the correct year of this birth. The tombstone also gives the wrong year for his death – which is documented in newspaper reports to year 1939, when it was reported that he died at age 81.
111. *Dallas Times Herald*; 1939-July-06, pg. 6: "Death Claims Wm. N. Coombes, Pioneer Here".
112. Dallas Public Library, case folder, Case No. 184; *John J. Good vs. Wm. Coombs et al.*; Petition of John J. Good, two pages, dated 1st of January 1858.
113. *Zachariah Ellis Coombes: Frontier Teacher on the Brazos Indian Reservation*; Jim Dillard; Sylvia Gann Mahoney, editor; (2014); 68 pages; Chapter 3, p. 15.
114. Public Library, case folder, Case No. 184 ; *John J. Good vs. Wm. Coombs et al.*; Petition of Intervenors, 16th July 1858; four pages.
115. Same as Note 39., except pages 44-45.
116. Data from: *FamilySearch.com*; (March-May 2025).

117. Same as note 81.
118. Texas State Historical Association: *tashaonline.org/handbook* (August 2025): "*Zachariah Ellis Coombes: Lawyer, Legislator, and Confederate Soldier*", Cecil Harper Jr., 1976 and 1994.
119. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1928, cited in Note 26.
120. Same as Note 118.
121. Same as Note 39., except page 52.
122. W.S. Adair newspaper history of 1925, cited in Note 26.
123. Data from: *FamilySearch.com*; (March-May 2025).
124. Case note file for Dallas County Probate case #111, Rachel A. Coombes (misabeled "Richard Coombes"), page 7 of the microfilm copy made by the *Dallas Genealogical Society*; as found on the UNT "Portal to Texas History (2025); page 7, Wm. Coombes death date is cited in the petition of David S. Harris to the Probate Court, dated May 1968, asking to be appointed administrator of the estate of Rachel A. Coombes. This petition is made by his attorney Z.E. Coombes.
125. a. 1985-February-11—*Dallas Times Herald*; Bill Porterfield;-p. A13; "*A Family and a Frontier lost in the American Metropolis*".
 b. and also from: *THE HIDDEN CITY: OAK CLIFF*; by Bill Minutaglio & Holly Williams; published by Elmwood Press and The Old Oak Cliff Conservation League, (1990); pp. 23, p. 206.
 cited as footnote ²: "Interview with Overton descendent Mrs. Jessie Embry." [Note: "*BREEDING, JESSIE , MINTA (MUNDY) OVERTON EMBREY: Born in Dallas county December 12, 1911 and died May 6, 2007 in McKinney. She was a direct descendent of the seventh settler of Dallas County, William Perry Overton.*" (Dallas Morning News, The (TX) - May 8, 2007 - page 1.)]
126. Texas State Historical Association: *tashaonline.org/handbook* (August 2025): "*Philip Henry Sheridan: A Key Figure in the American Civil War and Reconstruction*"; Joseph G. Dawson III; 1952 and 2020.
127. Same as Note 118.
128. Dallas County real estate deed records; Vol. xxxxxx
129. Dallas County real estate deed records; Vol. K, pages 135-138.
130. Same as Note 124, page 7 with dates, and also pages 12 -14 with executed Will.
131. Case note file for Dallas County Probate of O. J. M. Coombes, minor -- case # 129, such as the citation on page 16 of the digital PDF file. (Guardianships were then filed as Probate cases.)
132. Same as Note 124, and also cited in: Dallas County real estate deed records; Vol. S., page 475.
133. *FindAGrave.com*; (August 225); "Charlotte H. Jones Bradford"--Western Heights Cemetery; Dallas.
134. Dallas County real estate deed records; Vol. 51, pages 62-63.
135. Same as Note 98.
136. Same as Note 111.
137. Real estate history records of the Dallas Central Appraisal District (August 2025).

(End of Footnotes)