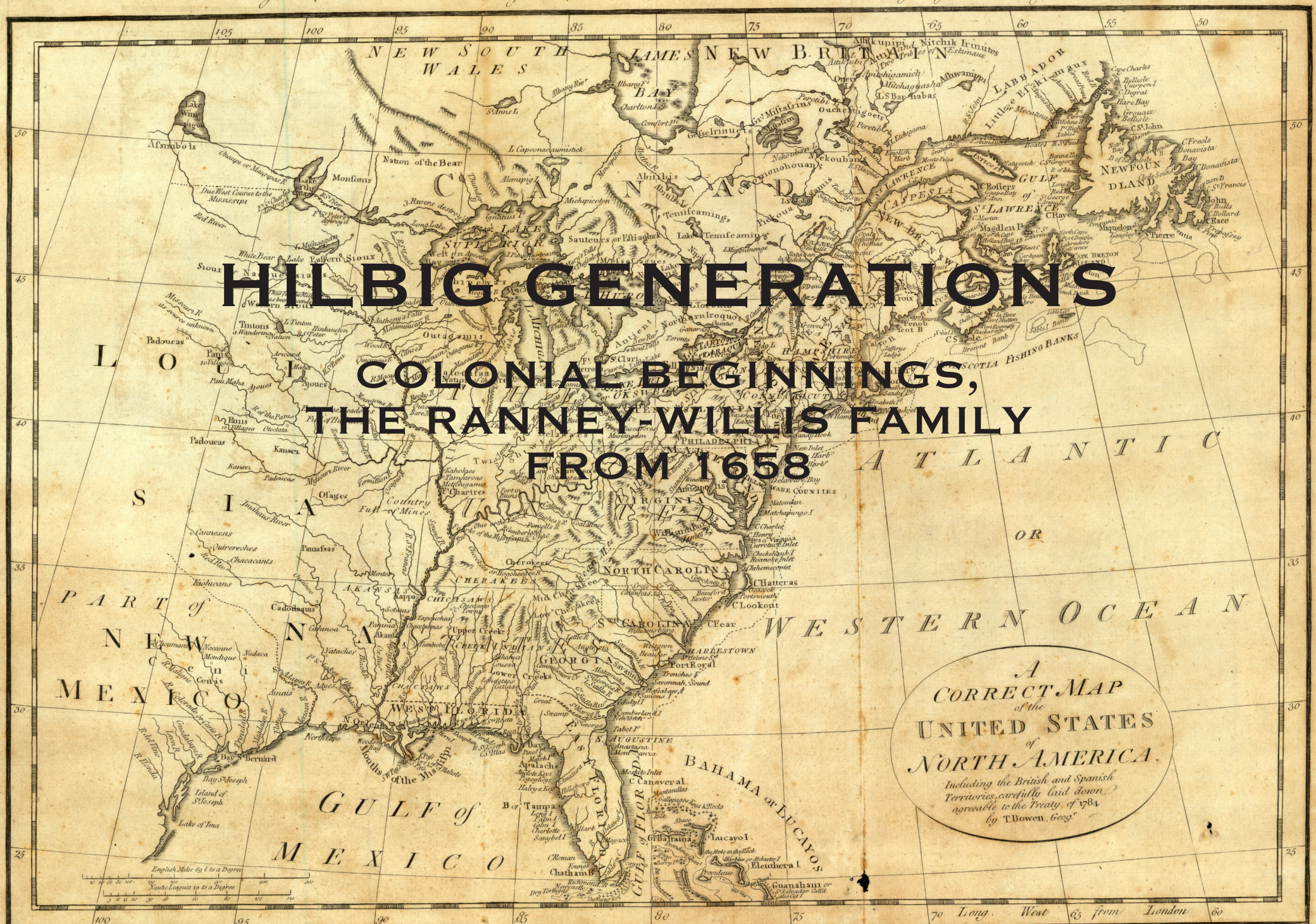


HILBIG GENERATIONS

COLONIAL BEGINNINGS, THE RANNEY-WILLIS FAMILY FROM 1658

A
CORRECT MAP
of the
UNITED STATES
of
NORTH AMERICA.
Including the British and Spanish
Territories, carefully laid down
agreeable to the Treaty of 1763.
by T. Bowen, Geog.



COLONIAL BEGINNINGS, THE RANNEY-WILLIS FAMILY FROM 1658

THOMAS RANNEY (1637-1737) M>MARY HUBBARD (1641-1721)

THOMAS RANNEY (1660-1726) M>REBECCA WILLETT (1658-1731)

WILLETT RANNEY (1693-1751) M>ANNE JOHNSON (1691-1731)

WILLETT RANNEY (1731-1818) M>MARY SAGE BUTLER (1735-1823)

RICHARD WILLIS (1760-1807) M>SYBIL RANNEY (1765-1833)

WILLETT RANNEY WILLIS (1799-1877) M>MARY BURCH (1800-1883)

WILLETT RANNEY WILLIS (1839-1902) M> FRANCES MARIA GRIMES (1839-1923)

FRANK GRIMES WILLIS (1867-1937) M>FRANKIE L MILLS (1867-1903)

ORLO FRANK WILLIS (1901-1944) M>FLORENCE EDITH TAYLOR (1901-1994)

LORALEA WILLIS (1928) M>FLOYD A HILBIG (1926-2007)

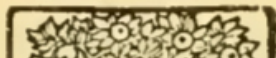
MIDDLETOWN UPPER HOUSES

A HISTORY OF THE NORTH SOCIETY OF MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT, FROM 1650 TO 1800, WITH GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL CHAPTERS ON EARLY FAMILIES AND A FULL GENEALOGY OF THE RANNEY FAMILY

By

CHARLES COLLARD ADAMS, M. A.

*Secretary-Treasurer of the Society of Middletown
Upper Houses, Incorporated*



DESCENDANTS OF THOMAS RANNEY FIRST GENERATION

The second volume of Scottish Arms names the Rany and Renny families. Herbert Rainie sat in Parliament for Dumfries in 1572. Robert Rayning was provost in 1578. Symon Renny was bailie of Inverkeithing in 1362. In 1450 Ranys and Rennys were owners of land in Forfarshire. Sir John Rany of England is named in 1660. The name is given in various forms in France and Flanders at a very early date.

The first known of our Thomas Rany is in the land records of Middletown, a house lot having been granted to him in 1658. His marriage is recorded as in May, 1659, to Mary Hubbard. At this date George Grave returned to Hartford and his grants were transferred to Thomas Rany, the record being dated in 1663. In 1698 Alexander Rollo, a Scotchman, and an attorney who had married a daughter of John Kirby, wrote and witnessed a will wherein "Thomas Rheny" gave to his son Ebenezer a parcel of land. This spelling does not occur in a deed dated a day later wherein the father gave adjoining land to a brother of Ebenezer. The conclusion is that Alexander Rollo is responsible for the form in which he wrote the name.

In Scottish records Rheny is a familiar name. The conclusion is that Thomas Rany came from Scotland. On his tombstone the name is Ranny, and about this date, 1713, his sons wrote their name as Rany and soon after as Ranny. The reproduction of their autographs is given herewith: The deed of 1698 is in the possession of Mrs. Charles Collard Adams.

While the public records give the birth of only five children, and the church records give the baptism of March, the will gives the names of the ten children who survived him. While the public record says he died June 25, 1713, the gravestone says he died June 21, 1713. He is supposed to

have been the first one buried here, as it was only in January preceding it was voted to set apart land for a cemetery.

His signature to deeds in his later years was attested by a + and it may be that he was as unfortunate in one respect as were others of his day and generation. He was not a member of the church. He served equally with others on various town committees and was an active member of the community.

In the census of 1670 when the inhabitants were rated he was rated at £105, the ninth in a list of 52 proprietors.

Mary Hubbard, his wife, was born in Hartford, January 16, 1611-2, the eldest child of George Hubbard and Elizabeth Watts. She died December 18, 1721, and is without a gravestone. In his will dated May 2, 1681, George Hubbard, aged 80, said, *"I give to my daughter Mary Rany forty shillings out of my Estate, but on further consideration instead of that forty shillings I give my sayd daughter the on halfe of my halfe Mille Lott on the East side the Great River by the list of 1673."* His homestead in Middletown was on Main Street extending south from what is Rapello Avenue and reaching back to the Connecticut River. Thomas Allen's homestead lay between Hubbard's and Riverside Cemetery.

HEREES
THE BODY OF
THOMAS RANNY
SENR•LIVED 97
YEARS•DIED JUNE 21ST 1713



OLD BURYING GROUND IN MIDDLETON CT

The cemetery, on Ranney Street in Cromwell CT, has the graves of the first three generations of Ranneys buried in America.





WILL OF THOMAS¹ RANNEY

In the Name of God, Amen, the Sixth day of March in the year of our Lord 1711. I, Thomas Ranny of Middletown in the County of Hartford in New England, Husbandman, being very sick and weak in body, but of competent understanding and memory, thanks be given to God, therefore calling to mind the mortality of my body, and knowing that it is appointed for men once to dye, Do make, and ordain this my last will and testament, that is to say, principally and first of all I give and recommend my soul into the hands of God y gave it, hoping through the Merits, death and passion of my Saviour Jesus Christ to have full and free pardon and forgiveness of all my sins, and to inherit everlasting life. And my body I commit to ye earth, to be decently buried at the discretion of my executors hereafter named, nothing doubting but at ye Generall resurrection I shall receive the same again by the mighty power of God, And, as touching such worldly estate wherewith it hath pleased God to bless me in this life, I give, demise and dispose of the same in the following manner, and form, that is to say, First I will that all those debts and duties as I do owe in right or Conscience to any manner of person or persons whatsoever shall be well and truly contented and paid, or ordained to be paid in convenient time after my decease, by my Executors hereafter named.

Item.

I give and bequeath to my dear wife, Mary, during her naturall life the free use and improvement of that half of my dwelling house wherein we now live, with the seller belonging to it, and ye one half of my homelott, and half of my old barn with the new end thereof, together with my whole upper lott in the long meadow both plowing land and grass land, with two acres on ye near neck, the use of a teem with a yoke of oxen and a horse, and necessary

instruments belonging to it, and so much

Bedding and household stuff as she shall need for her own personall comfort and benefit, and likewise she shall have the whole depose of that land which her Father Hubbard gave her, and I do ordain and appoint my son Thomas to take care of his Mother after my decease and to see that what I have willed to her for her comfortable maintenance be improved that end.

Item.

I give to my son Thomas, the lott on which his house stands as it is now divided, and one acre and half of my lott in Wongung Meadow, and a quarter part of Butt Swamp lott, also the whole of ye upper long meadow lott after his mothers decease also I give to him one acre of my boggy meadow swamp lott the half of my timber hill lott ye south side, & a quarter part within fifteen acres of the plain lott or Cold Spring, having his part divided to him by quantity and quality, also a quarter part of my long lott on the cast side of ye great River, also I give to my son Thomas a quarter part of the undivided land y is yet in the town, also I give to Thomas a quarter part of the round meadow and further neck after my daughter Savages three acres of upland lying next ye meadow be taken out, also a quarter part of the half of that lott near Wongung bars, or Indian Hill, the west part of the lott with the swamp adjoining to it, this lott begins from the Highway eastward against Jonathan Warners. It is my will that this lott be split into, and the east part of it butting upon the highway against Jonathan Warners I do reserve for myself, to dispose of as I please, the other half of the lott, viz, the west part of it with the swamp adjoining to it, this lott begins from the Highway eastward against Jonathan Warners. It is my will that this lott be split into, and the east part of it butting upon the highway against Jonathan Warners I do reserve for myself, to dispose of as I please, the other half of the lott, viz, the west part of it with the swamp adjoining to it it is my will that it shall be equally divided betwixt my four sons, Thomas, John, Joseph and Ebenezer.

Item. I give to my son John, that lott whereon his house stands, with one acre of my boggy meadow lot, also the just half of what is left of my Wongung meadow after Thomas has his own acre and half taken out and the fourth part of my lott in the plain to be divided to him by quantity and quality, also a quarter part of my long lott on the east side of the great river, also a quarter part of butt swamp lott, this I gave to him formerly by a deed of gift, also eight acres of my timber hill lott, and something better, this also he had formerly by a deed of gift, also a third part of my lower long meadow lott both plowing and grass land and swamp after my son Ebenezer's three acres be taken out which he has now under improvement, this I will to him to take in possession after my decease, also a quarter part of the further neck, round meadow, after the three acres of upland which I give to my

Daughter Mary Savage be taken out, also a quarter part of the undivided land in the town equal with his brethren, also a quarter part of the half of that lott near Wongung bars, or Indian Hill butting upon the highway east over against my son Jonathan Warners, the west part of the said lott, which lott I have split into, reserving the east part of it for myself, with the swamp adjoining to the west part equal with Thomas.

Item: I give to my son Joseph that lott whereon his house stands, and one acre of my boggy meadow, with the just half of my Wongung meadow after Thomas has his one acre and half taken out, also the fourth part and fifteen acres of my plain lott, the fifteen acres to be taken out of Thomas part in consideration of Thomas being made better y he, at timber hill. also to be divided to him by quantity and quality as ye rest of his brethren have, also a quarter part of my Long lott on the east side of the great river also a quarter part of the west part of my lott near Wongung bars equal with Thomas and John as before mentioned, with the swamp adjoining to it, also a third part of my lower long meadow lott both plowing and grass land and swamp, after Ebenezer has his three acres taken out

this I also will that he shall have in possession after my decease, also a quarter part of further neck and round meadow after the three acres of upland which I give to my daughter Mary Savage be taken out, also a quarter par of butt swamp lott, also a quarter part of the undivided land in the town.

Item.

I give to my son Ebenezer the half of my dwelling house, homestead and old barn, and it is my will that my said son Ebenezer shall have the other half of my dwelling house, barn & homestead after his mother's decease provided he do pay to Mary Savage, Elizabeth Warner, and Easter Savage five pounds appease in pay, also that he shall give to Hannah, Margaret and Abigail so much of his part of Cold Spring lott as shall amount to or produce fifteen pound in pay, and if he shall refuse and neglect to pay his three sisters first, mentioned, viz, Mary Savage, Elizabeth Warner and Easter Savage their Legacy fifteen pound he shall then resign 14% up two acres in the near neck, but it he pays them their due according to my will he shall enjoy the same after my and my wife's decease when he shall take possession of the whole of the homestead with all the buildings upon it, also I give to him one acre of the boggy meadow, and the fourth part of the plain lott to be divided to him according to quantity and quality, also a quarter part of the west part of my lott near Wongung bars or Indian Hill as before mentioned, equal with Thomas, John and Joseph, with the swamp adjoining to the west part, the east part of ye said lott butting upon the highway against my son Jonathan Warner I have reserved for myself, also a quarter part of my long lott on the east side of the great river, also a quarter part o further neck and round meadow after the three acres I have given to my daughter Mary Savage be taken out, also a quarter part of butt swamp lott, also a quarter part of the undivided land, also I give to my son Ebenezer three acres or thereabouts which he now improves of my lower long meadow lott, both plowing land and grass land and swamp.

Item: I give to my Son and daughter John and Mary Savage besides wt they have had formerly given to them in land by a deed of gift, and household stuff, I do now give them and theirs forever three acres of my land on the farther neck against ye lott in the round meadow so as may be convenient for them to come to tr meadow land running up to the highway also five pound in pay, to be paid to ym by my son Ebenezer.

Item: I give to my son and daughter Jonathan and Elizabeth Warner besides what they have had given to them formerly in land by a deed of gift and household stuff, it is my will that they have given to the other viz: Mary & Easter, five pounds in pay, to be paid to them by my son Ebenezer.

Item: I give to my son and daughter Nathaniel and Easter Savage besides what they have already received formerly in land by a deed of gift and household stuff, it is my will that they shall have their five pound as ye rest have which Ebenezer is to pay, and also I do give to ym and to yr heirs forever the half of my half mile lott.

Item: I give to Hannah, Margaret and Abigail, five pound apiece in current pay which my son Ebenezer is to pay unto them out of his part in the plain lott in Consideration of his having the whole of the homestead also I do give to them what remains of my boggy meadow that I have not given to yr brothers, what remains be it more or less to be equally divided amongst them after my decease also two acres in the east side of the near neck next to a highway to be equally divided amongst them after my decease, Also it is my will that what remains of the household stuff besides what yr mother needs for her own personall use and benefit, shall be equally divided amongst them, also two coves, three mares and all the sheep to be equally divided betwixt them, dividing of them as they see cause, also the team with two oxen, one horse together with all the husbandry tools and what bedding and household stuff shall be left after yr mothers decease shall be equally divided

amongst my three daughters Hannah, Margaret and Abigail, Abigail the just half of my half mile lott, the upper part of it next to ye short lotts.

Item: I give to my grandson Willett Ranney the remaining part of timber hill lott which consists of eight acres or thereabouts, four acres of ye plowing land he may now take possession of, the other four acres of pasture he shall have ye possession and improvement of after myne and my wife's decease.

Item. I give to my grandson Thomas Savage my lott in the dead swamp.

Lastly I do nominate and appoint my son Thomas, John, and Joseph to be executors of this my will and testament, to that it be duly executed according to the true intent and meaning of ye same, also I do nominate and appoint Mr. David Deming, and my son John Savage as overseers of this my last will and testament to see yt the Executors do fully execute this my will and testament and yt according to ye true intent and meaning of it. And I do hereby utterly disallow, revoke and dis-anull all and every other former testaments, wills and legacies, bequests and Executors by me in any wayes before this time named, willed and bequeathed, ratifying and confirming this and no other to be my last will and testament.

In Testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal this eighth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eleven, being the tenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Ann by the Grace of God, Queen of Great Britain, France and Ireland, defender of ye faith &c.

his
THOMAS x RANNY (seal)
mark



EXPLANATION.
B or Br. Brook or Branch.
C or Cr. Creek.
Co. Carrying Place.
P. Point.
R. River or Run.
I. Island.
L. Lake.
F. Fort and Fortified Place.
M. Local Mark for the Meeting-house of the Town or Township.
E. English Habitation.
A. Indian Habitation.
T. Two Streets East & Long observed.
The Setting of the Tide.
Land formerly claimed by the Massachusetts Bay Province.

In 1652 the General Court authorized Thomas Lord of Hartford to act in all the towns "both for setting of tones and otherwise, as at all times, occasions and necessities may or shall require." His fees were fixed. "To any house in Mattabeseek, eight shillings."

**PLAN OF MIDDLETOWN
"NORTH OF THE RIVER"**
After 1680 known as "Upper Houses"
and after 1851 as the Town of Cromwell

JOSEPH KIRBY	NATHANIEL WHITE 85 Rods	SAMUEL STOCKING House
SAMUEL STOCKING Farm	JOHN KIRBY	THOMAS RANNY George Rannys
DAVID SAGE	JOHN WILCOX Thomas Hubbard	JOHN WARRNER Robert Wedger
JOHN CLARK Thomas Hubbard	SAMUEL HALL Joseph Smith	SAMUEL HALL Paulinas Treat

NOTE: The names of prominent settlers are given in capitals.

JOHN SAUVE
Wm Blunfield

ANTHONY MARTIN

JOHN SAUVE

Signed, sealed published pronounced and declared by me
Thomas Ranny as my last Will and testament in the
presence of us ye subscribers, viz:

Nath: White Seni

Samll frary

Timothy Sage

RANNEY–WILLIS FAMILY IN AMERICA

For many Americans the History of our Country dates from November 9, 1620 when the Puritans sighted the New Land from the deck of the Mayflower. From then until even now there have been waves of pioneers searching for new homes in new parts of America.

Soon after the settling of Plymouth some of the more venturesome traveled up the rivers and through the forests and came back with glowing accounts of the lush pastures and rich valleys they had seen. Military outposts were established at Saybrook at the mouth of the Connecticut River and at Windsor, but it was not until 1635 that a large group led by their pastor, Reverend Thomas Hooker, settled at Hartford, and the next year when Roger Williams began the settlement of Providence. At this time the Pequot Indians had begun to attack travelers when alone or in small groups and in the winter of 1636–37 the Indians had become so dangerous that the English pioneers realized that it was to be a war to the finish and they made an attack on the Pequot settlement, destroying the tribe.

As the years went by roads of a sort were worn between the major settlements, and along these roads, and especially along the banks of the Connecticut River, those passing could see the possibilities for homes and farms. There was one high point where the River bends toward the southeast. It was 14 miles down river from Hartford and 30 miles

from the mouth of the river at Saybrook and was connected by a crude road with New Haven. The teepees of an Indian tribe had once covered this point, their town being called Mattabesett. In 1651 the Connecticut General Court decided that "Mattabeseck shall be a towne." In 1652 a log church was erected and in 1653 the Court gave the community the name of "Middletown". It is of the early years of Middletown that we shall think as we trace the first few generations of our ancestors in this country.

The book "Middletown Upper Houses" by Charles Collard Adams is an amazing treasure-chest of facts concerning the early settlers of Middletown and their descendants down to the year of its publication (1908). It begins with the 12 founders: John Clark, Samuel Hall, John Kirby, Anthony Martin, Thomas Ranney, David Sage, John Savage, Samuel Stocking Thomas Stow, John Warner, Nathaniel White, and John Wilcox, all of whom came to Middletown in the 1650's. All were men of vigor and character. They could not be otherwise in a new land where each family must make its own way with its own hands.

Some had been of Rev. Hooker's congregation in Hartford. Some had come more recently from Europe, but all sustained the church and the school.

As would be expected there were many intermarriages between the members of these families through several generations, and it would be hard to find a record of more successful ones.

BOWLES'S MAP OF THE SEAT OF WAR IN NEW ENGLAND,
COMPREHENDING THE PROVINCES OF MASSACHUSETT BAY,
AND NEW HAMPSHIRE, WITH THE COLONIES OF CONNECTICUT
AND RHODE ISLAND. 1776

THE FIRST GENERATION OF THE RANNEY FAMILY IN AMERICA

The first record of Thomas Ranney tells of a house lot being granted to him in Middletown in 1658. It is supposed that he came from Scotland. The name was variously spelled as Rany, Ranny, Rheny, the spelling of Ranney having become established by the time his grandson was making his will in 1751.

Thomas Ranney married Mary Hubbard, daughter of George Hubbard and Elizabeth Watts, in May 1659. She was born in Hartford January 16, 1641 and died December 18, 1721. He died June 21, 1713. On his tombstone his age at time of death is given as 97 years. This would show him to have been 43 at the time of his marriage while his wife was about 18. Such wide differences in the ages of couples was not uncommon among the early settlers.

They had eleven children of whom ten grew to maturity;

Thomas, born March 1, 1660, married Rebecca Willett

John, born Nov. 14, 1662, married Hannah Turner

Joseph, born Sept. 1663, married Mary Starr

Mary, born Oct. 1660, married John Savage

Elizabeth, born April 1668, married Jonathan Warner

Esther, bapt. Apr. 1673, married Nathaniel Savage

Hannah, bapt. March 1675, died Nov. 1713

Margaret, bapt. Jan. 1678, married Stephen Clark

Ebenezer, born about 1681, married Sarah Warner

Mercy, bapt. Nov. 1682

Abigail, born ---, married Walter Harris

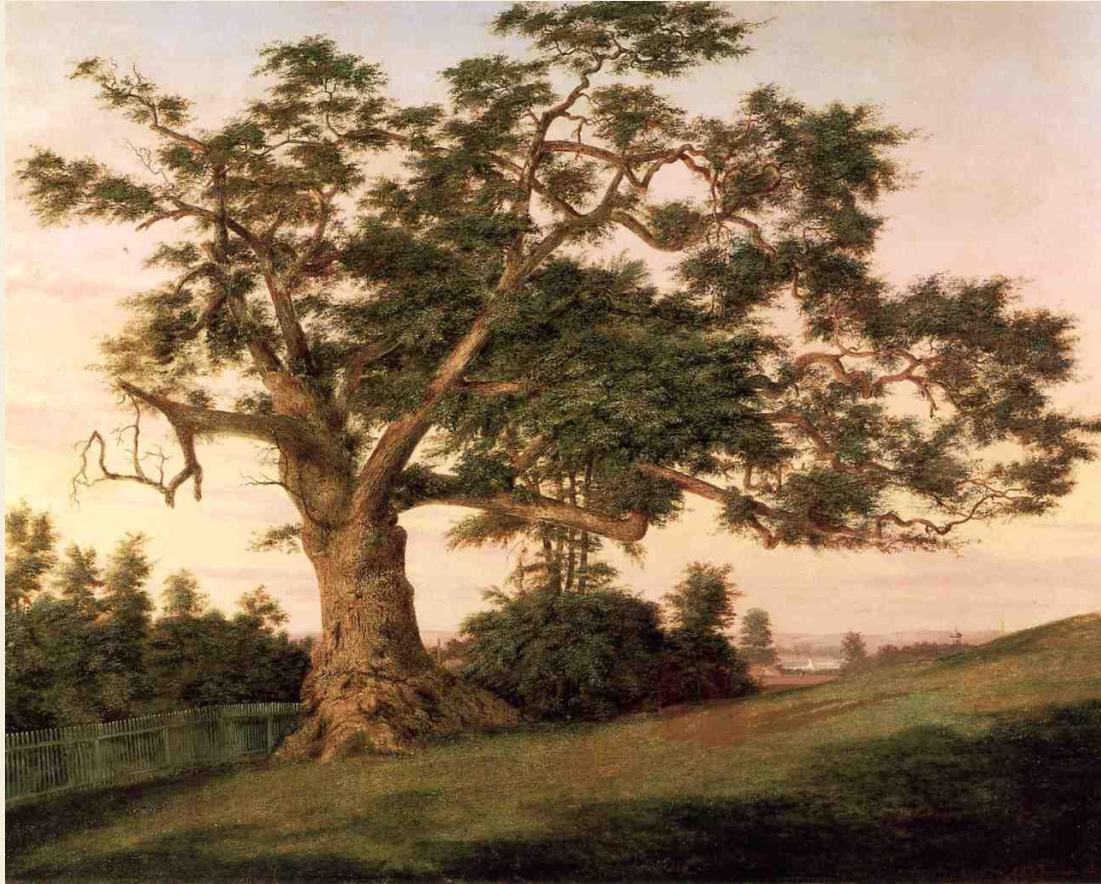
Thomas Ranney must have had a full life. He had crossed the sea in search of a new home and had found a wonderful wife and family. His years must have been active and full of gratification as he turned forest and boggy

meadows into fertile fields. Twenty separate pieces of land are listed in his will and he and his wife had seen their children and their children's children grow up and settle in homes of their own around them. Mary Hubbard Ranney had borne clever children and through a quarter of a century had not been without a baby in her arms, and may readily have held her fiftieth grandchild,

They had come as pioneers into a new land and had lived to see it become a land of happy homes and plenty.

THE SECOND GENERATION OF THE RANNEY FAMILY

The second Thomas Ranney was married on March 29, 1691 to Rebecca Willett of Hartford. She was the daughter of Nathaniel Willett and Hannah Adams and grand daughter of Jeremy Adams and Rebecca Fletcher. Jeremy Adams had built and kept a tavern on the site of what is now the home Office Building of the Travelers Insurance Company. He had come to Hartford in 1636 and bought the land on which the inn was to be located in 1651. He was given the permit to operate the tavern in 1661-62 with the provision that he reserve a chamber to be used as a meeting place for the General Court, the chamber to be "*furnished with chairs and tables, a large leather chair and carpet, with accommodation for forty or fifty people.*" In 1685 Jeremy Adams died and the General Court appointed a committee to make a sale of the tavern. It was bought by Zachery Sanford, Jeremy's grandson, a cousin of Rebecca Willett. It was then known as Sanford's Tavern and it was here in 1687 that the General Court was in session with the Charter when the demand of Governor Andros was ignored, the lights put out, and the charter was concealed in "The Charter Oak Tree".



The Royal Charter of 1662, granted by King Charles II, is one of the earliest and most significant legal documents in Connecticut history. In 1687, King James II became intent upon gaining control of all the colonies and revoked the Royal Charters. He sent his Agent with an armed troop to seize the document. Here the story takes a dramatic twist. In the candle lit meeting room, leaders of the Connecticut colony met with Sir Edmond Andros, the King's Royal Governor of the Dominion. They gathered to debate the surrender of the Charter for several hours. Suddenly the room went dark. When the confusion cleared and the candles were lit again, it was discovered that the Charter was gone from the table. It was hidden in the trunk of a nearby large white oak tree.

On August 21, 1856, a violent storm felled the Charter Oak Tree which was estimated to be nearly 1,000 years old. A monument was erected in 1905 at the location of the fallen tree. It stands at the corner of Charter Oak Avenue and Charter Oak Place in downtown Hartford. The monument is inscribed, "Near this spot stood the Charter Oak, memorable in the history of the colony of Connecticut as the hiding place of the charter October 31, 1687. The tree fell August 21, 1856."



HIDING THE ORIGINAL CHARTER IN THE OAK.

Thomas² Ranney followed his father in acquiring and improving land, and much of his will in given over to the distribution of the parcels of land among his children. One piece of property so mentioned would seem to have a special significance in that it indicates more than possession anything else that to him this was the permanent family home. This is the orchard. It takes time and thought to plant an orchard and to care for it in such a way as to make it a valued possession. Men do not do this in the face of Indian scares, or when looking for a new home. Such had no place in Middletown for over fifty years. The tribe of Pequots had been exterminated in 1637. King Phillip's war (1675-1678) had not been fought in Connecticut, although Connecticut troops had had a prominent part in winning it. And when Thomas² Ranney was making his will, Connecticut was as secure as it has ever been since. Thomas² Ranney died in 1726. In 1729 his widow married Jacob White.

Seven children were born to Thomas² Ranney and Rebecca Willett:
Thomas, born 1692; married Esther Wilcox of Middletown
Willett, born 1684; married Anne Johnson of New Haven
George, born 1695; married Mary Hale of Middletown
Rebecca, born 1700; married Jonathan Doolittle
Nathaniel, born 1702; married Rachel Sage
Ann, born 1706
Margaret, born 1708; married Ebenezer Ranney

In the names of two of her children Rebecca Willett Ranney honored her father, Nathaniel Willett.

WILLETT RANNEY OF THE THIRD GENERATION

Willett³ Ranney (Thomas², Thomas¹) was born March 30, 1694, the son of Thomas² Ranney and Rebecca Willett. He married Anne Johnson, daughter of John Johnson and Mabel Grannis of New Haven, April 20, 1720. Her father

was the son of Peter Johnson who had come from Yorkshire with his four sons sometime previous to 1653.

Willett³ Ranney was given some property by the will of his grandfather Thomas¹ Ranney and received a farm from his father who died Feb. 6, 1726.

Willett³ Ranney and his wife Anne Johnson had four children:

Thankful, born Aug. 22, 1722; died April 6, 1768

Anne, born Oct. 9, 1723; married John Sage

Rebecca, born Oct. 3, 1726; married Ebenezer Savage

Willett, born March 29, 1731 at whose birth the mother died.

The father of Willett³ Ranney had died in 1726 and the mother Rebecca Willett Ranney had remarried in 1729, this time to Jacob White, a widower with a family of grown children, the oldest of whom, Deborah White, married Willett Ranney ten months after his first wife died. In such company

It may readily be supposed that the baby Willett⁴ and his little sisters had good care.

Two children were born of the marriage of Willett³ Ranney and Deborah White:

Deborah, born May 28, 1733; married Lewis Samuel Sage

Elizabeth, born March 17, 1734; married Jonathan Savage

Three of his neighbors helped Willett³ Ranney in the preparation of his will just three days before his death, Sept 5, 1751 at the early age for the Ranney's of 57. This was the first will in which the name was spelled "Ranney" and was so signed. His son Willett⁴ and the son-in-law, Ebenezer Savage were to be the executors. He was the last of his line to spend his entire life in Connecticut. With his son pioneering was to begin again.



WILLETT RANNEY OF THE FOURTH GENERATION

*The French-Indian War, The Revolution, and a New Home
in New York State*

Willett⁴ Ranney (Willett³, Thomas², Thomas¹) was born March 29, 1731 the son of Willett³ and Anne Johnson. He was married on Nov. 19, 1752 to Mary Butler, the 17 year old daughter of Benjamin Butler and Thankful Sage. Her father was of a family from Rev. Hooker's Hartford church. Her mother was a granddaughter of David Sage, one of the founders of Middletown. The young people were of family groups that had been neighbors for nearly one hundred years. It might have seemed that there would be another generation of quiet tranquility, but it was not to be so. Perhaps it was in the nature of the times and perhaps it was in the nature of the young people themselves, certainly they were ready for the events which did come.

They had twelve children:

Chloe, born March 2, 1754, married Nathaniel Gilbert
Mary, born March 2, 1755, married Bill Smith of Conn.
James, born Feb. 27, 1757, married and lived in New York
Lucretia, born Jan. 20, 1759, married Benjamin Murray
Seth, born Jan. 21, 1761, married Eleanor Matthews
Sarah, born Jan. 2, 1763, married David I. Andrus
Sybil, born Jan. 7, 1765, married Richard Willis
Lucy, bapt. Jan. 1767, married ---Bradner
Willett, bapt. Aug 6, 1769; married Betsy Robbins
Benjamin, bapt Aug 6, 1769, (twin with Willett)
Persis, bapt April 4, 1773, married Samuel Jarvis
Butler, born after Jan. 1776, married Orva Heath

His father had died when Willett⁴ was only twenty years old, leaving him the homestead of ninety acres. Here were born their first five children. In 1761 he sold this property and bought the nearby homestead of his father-in-law who had been lost at sea. Here were born five more children,

but in the meantime the French-Indian War (1755-1764) had been going on and he with fifteen others from the Ranney families and more than thirty more of their neighbors were engaged in that war. Much of their fighting was done in New York, thus introducing them to an area new and different, and with the closing of that war, inviting to the pioneering spirit. In 1776 Willett⁴ Ranney left Middletown with his family and settled in Sandisfield in southwestern Massachusetts, near the New York border and just then opened for settlement.

A list of men born in Middletown who served during the Revolutionary War contains the names of 121, most of the names being recognized as being derived from the founders. Of these, 13 are Ranney, Willett Ranney being among them.

In 1778 Willett⁴ Ranney and his family moved to New Lebanon, New York where they seem to have stayed for a number of years, but eventually they went up the Hudson and out the Mohawk River and the records of Oneida county show them to have been established at Ft. Stanwix, now Rome, surrounded by the families of their sons and sons-in-law among the earliest settlers of central New York State.

Willett⁴ Ranney lived to be 87 and his wife 86. They had been married more than 65 years at the time of his death in 1818. Few persons have had busier lives than these two and few have carried their burdens better. Mary Butler Ranney had twelve children and through much of the time while they were little her husband was subject to being called for military duty and while some were still very young her pioneering husband was leading his family into what must have seemed to her the "wild west" of central New York. With all the difficulties of her life in a new land she was able to build into those children of whom we have a record, a steadfast character which does honor to the memory of their mother.

SYBIL RANNEY OF THE FIFTH GENERATION BECOMES SYBIL WILLIS

Sybil⁵ Ranney, daughter of Willett⁴ Ranney and Mary Butler was born at Middletown Jan.7, 1765. She was but eleven years old when the family moved to Sandisfield in Massachusetts, and thirteen when they all moved to New Lebanon. A few years later when she was twenty or twenty-one they were all at Fort Stanwix, far out along the Mohawk River in a country new to all but the Indians.

She was a pioneer, the child of pioneers. She knew what it meant to have her father in the armies, away from home, fighting an enemy which was much too near and child as she was during those years of the French-Indian and Revolutionary Wars, must have had to help in the home, in the garden, and with the stock. Later at Ft. Stanwix she must have experienced the thrills and fears which came from the nearness of the Indian tribes, friendly and unfriendly.

About 1790 she was married to Richard Willis who was born in Pennsylvania of Welch descent in 1760 and had come to central New York, a pioneer, like the rest. He was a blacksmith which must have made him a useful and valued citizen in this new country.

Richard Willis and Sybil Ranney had five children:
Catherine, of whom we have no other record.
Delia Ann, born 1793; married to William Hart in Adams
Willett⁶ Ranney, born Feb.22, 1799, married Mary Burch
Sybil Jane, of whom we have no other record
Henry, of whom we have no other record.

The fact that of the five children, we have records of but two, reminds us that the home was in a newly established part of the country where records of births and of marriages, and even of deaths were not yet kept with the

care customary in the more settled New England states.

Sybil Ranney Willis' husband died in 1807 in Rome, New York, and she, like her grandmother Rebecca Willett, turned to a member of the White family for a second husband. She had probably known her second husband when she was a child in Middletown. Joseph White died in 1827 and she spent her later years with her son, Willett⁶ Ranney Willis in Adams, NY

THE SIXTH GENERATION Children of Sybil Ranney and Richard Willis

Delia Ann Willis, born 1793, was married Sept. 15, 1816 to William Hart in Adams, NY. Their son, John Jay Hart, born March 13, 1831 and lived until 1896, For many years he conducted the leading Dry Goods business in Oswego and the second Willett Ranney Willis clerked for him while a young man and always remembered him with affection.

Willet Ranney Willis⁶ (Sybil⁵ Ranney, Willett⁴, Willett³, Thomas², Thomas¹), born Feb. 22, 1799; died Jan. 27, 1877. He married May 19, 1829 to Mary Burch on May 18, 1829. She was born Jan. 27, 1800, died Sept. 2, 1882, the daughter of Robert Burch and Polly Spaulding.

For many years Willett⁶ Ranney Willis was a manufacturer of woolen goods in Adams, Jefferson County, NY. He was a man of exceptionally high character and was held up by his children as a model for their children. He was a noted abolitionist and conducted a "station of the underground rail road" to Canada for escaped slaves, many times driving through the night to the Canadian border with run-away slaves. His wife, Mary Burch was of the same sterling goodness. Her parents had been pioneer settlers in Northwestern New York, and one can get an idea of the remoteness of the area from the story of Robert Burch's visit to New York City, where he saw a stove for the

first time, and being intrigued with it had bought one to take home with him. After his neighbors had heard of the stove and seen it, a committee of them called on the Burch family and counselled against using the stove on the ground that it was sinful to shut the light of the fire away from his children's faces.

Willett⁶ Ranney Willis and his wife Mary Burch had six children, all of whom grew up, married and had families of their own.

Mary Sybil, born Dec. 3, 1830

Elizabeth, born July 20, 1832

Robert Burch, born Sept. 6, 1834

Isaac Burch, born Aug. 27, 1836

Willett Ranney, born Sept. 15, 1839

Katherine, born Jan. 20, 1847

THE SEVENTH GENERATION

Children of Willett Ranney Willis and Mary Burch

Willett⁷ Ranney Willis Jr., Son of Willett⁶ Ranney Willis and Mary Burch was born Sept. 15, 1839, Adams, NY, and died March 3, 1902 In Pueblo, Colorado. He was married April 7, 1863 to Frances Maria Grimes, daughter of James Stanley Grimes and Frances Warner of Springfield, Mass. Nine children were born of this union, seven of whom grew to maturity. In the fall of 1872 with five little children, the family left New York and the comforts of a well settled region to make a new home in Colorado at the foot of the Spanish Peaks, seventy miles from the nearest railroad. The story of the pioneer days in Colorado is told by the sons, Edward and Frank, in letters.

Children of Willett Ranney Willis Jr. and Frances Grimes:

Mary Frances, born Nov. 27th, 1864, Adams, NY

Edward Jarvis, born Oct. 28, 1866, Brownsville, NY

Frank Grimes, born Nov. 13, 1867, Brownsville NY

Stanley John, born Sept. 11, 1869, Brownsville NY.

Kate Elizabeth, born Dec. 5, 1870, Brownsville NY.

Rosa Belle, born Oct. 16, 1872, Adams, NY

Anna Flora, born Jan. 9, 1874, LaVeta, CO

Willett Ranney, born Nov. 9, 1881, LaVeta, CO



THE WILLIS FAMILY IN ADAMS (ABOUT 1870)

Isaac Mary Robert Elizabeth Willett (back row)

Katherine Father Willis Mother Willis (front row)

THE FAMILY HOME IN ADAMS, NEW YORK (ABOUT 1880)





WILLETT RANNEY WILLIS II 1839–1902

FRANCES MARIA GRIMES WILLIS 1839–1923

Frances was the daughter of James Stanley Grimes and Frances Warner, born June 12, 1839 in Buffalo, NY. She moved to Colorado in November 1872 and died March 5, 1923 in Colorado Springs, CO.



1880 MAP OF COLORADO

Nell's new topographical & township map of the State of Colorado (1880). Denver Public Library Digital Collections





A Letter from Edward *January 4, 1954*

As nearly as I can figure it out, Father (Willett Ranney Willis) must have been around thirty when the group picture was taken. We came to Colorado when he and Mother were thirty-three.

I often think of it-how in the world did he and Mother manage with the family they had? First at Uncle Robert's at length, then at the house on the lower end of that ranch where Mother taught school and where Anna was born. I remember when Anna came, we had a big clothes basket and Mother told me to lift the blanket

on one corner-and there was Anna! She had arrived in the night with Aunt Murray and Father as attendants.

From there we went up the Cucharas above the "Shut In" where Father had built another log house and the house door opened into a corral. A young horse which was frightened by a buffalo robe hanging on the fence ran into the house while Mother had gone to the spring for water. He climbed up on the big chest we had back of the bed, and when Mother got back the horse was standing with hind feet on the chest and fore feet just inches from Baby Anna on the bed. Kittle and Belie had run—one into the fireplace and the other under the table. The horse had stepped on Belle's finger and broken it.

It was while we were there that the army grasshoppers came and I can see yet the cloud they made as they came over the rocky hilltop. They ate up our garden, all but the peas, and the next season they took these.

Later we went out on the Santa Clara creek where Father had some sheep on shares from a Mr. Nolin. Father also had by then, some cattle—and the coyotes came killing the sheep. I remember that it was there that Mother had an abscessed tooth and had to go with Father the twenty-five miles to LaVeta to have it pulled.

From there we went to what we called our "Spring Ranch" where Father put up a log house and built corrals and dug a well. Among other things plentiful there, was a family of skunks, and one of the skunks came into our bedroom, and Mother, standing on bed and chair, somehow directed it out.

Next Father traded some cattle for our Cucharas ranch, rented a school section up behind the hills and preempted acres across the valley. I remember herding our cattle out after milking, riding with a lunch and rain coat on the back of the saddle, and bringing them in at night to be milked.

I often think of all that Father and Mother went through, and still fed us all. What a wonderful couple they were to dare for us all, even though as we grew older we could help a little. Mother, trained in a boarding school; principal of a girls' school in Adams; Father, a hard, hard worker, and fortunately a good trader, and Mother the, I think, the "balance wheel" of it all!

THE GRIMES AND WARNER FAMILIES

James Stanley Grimes

James Stanley Grimes was born in Boston, May 10, 1807. Both of his parents had come recently from England.

The father died in 1811 and the mother soon afterward. The father had quarreled with his family and as there were no relatives in this country, the four children were placed in the Boston Orphan Asylum. John the youngest, died there. Homes were found for the two girls, Fanny and Eliza, and James was bound out to a man in Braintree. The arrangement was an unhappy one for the boy and he ran away, coming finally to Lynn where he learned shoe-making.

As he worked, he studied and by the time he was grown had acquired a remarkable command of English and a fine scientific grasp of the world about him, which together

made him outstanding to the end of his long and eventful life.

When a young man he began the study of Law and was working and studying in a Law office in Springfield when he met his future wife. She was Frances Warner, daughter of John Warner and Fanny Sanderson, the father a son of John Warner Jr., a Revolutionary soldier from Middletown, Connecticut, and the mother a daughter of Amaziah Sanderson, also a Revolutionary soldier.



James Stanley Grimes and Frances Warner had four children, **Frank Stanley Grimes**, who became a physician and served as a surgeon in the Civil War, and practiced many years in Deep River. **Frances Maria Grimes**, who became a teacher and married **Willett Ranney Willis II**. **Rose Amelia Grimes** and **Isabel Grimes**, both of whom became teachers and after their retirement, made a home for their father in Evanston, Ill.

THE WILLIS FAMILY ON THE RANCH ABOUT 1894

JAMES STANLEY GRIMES 1807-1903

THE GRIMES AND WARNER FAMILIES

John Warner

John Warner of Springfield, born June 22, 1782, was a descendant in the fifth or sixth generation of the Warner family of which the first American generation was a contemporary of the first Thomas Ranney in Middletown, Connecticut. His father was the "John Warner Jr." of War Department records who was a soldier of the Revolutionary War, born in Middletown in 1760.

Three Warner brothers, John, Thomas and Bolomon, had their homes in Springfield in the early 1850's when James Stanley Grimes met and married Frances Warner, eldest of John Warner's daughters. All three of the Warners are believed to have been skilled gunsmiths, Thomas being Master Armorer of the Arsenal.

The photograph of John Warner was made after much urging from Grandfather Grimes, and it indicates not too much pleasure in the operation. He was a quiet man and affectionate in a wordless way as may be assumed from the memory which Aunt Isabel Grimes had of his appreciation of her watchfulness at table, in passing to him whatever indicated in response to a nod or a pointing finger, but without the speaking of a word.

THE EIGHT GENERATION

Children of Willett⁷ Ranney Willis and Frances Maria Grimes

Of the nine children born to Willett⁷ Ranney Willis and Frances Maria Grimes, Frank Grimes Willis was the third. He was born Nov, 13, 1867 in Brownsville, NY and died Feb. 23, 1937 in Baxter Springs, KS.

Frank was only five years old when the family came to Colorado but the events of the trip and the new surroundings made a permanent impression on his mind, as we may see from the letter which he wrote to his son Sidney while Sidney was visiting his Aunt in China.



JOHN WARNER 1782-1855

His education which was well started by his mother in her own home, was continued through three years of formal schooling in New York, and later, as long as he lived, by the mastery of every problem that presented itself.

He taught in the public schools, took the census in Huerfano County in 1890, and as a young man went to Pueblo CO to work for Victory G. Hills, Civil and Mining Engineer. He remained with the firm first as an employee, and later as partner, for many years in the Cripple Creek District, surveying many of the famous mines and set the plans for the town of Victor. For more

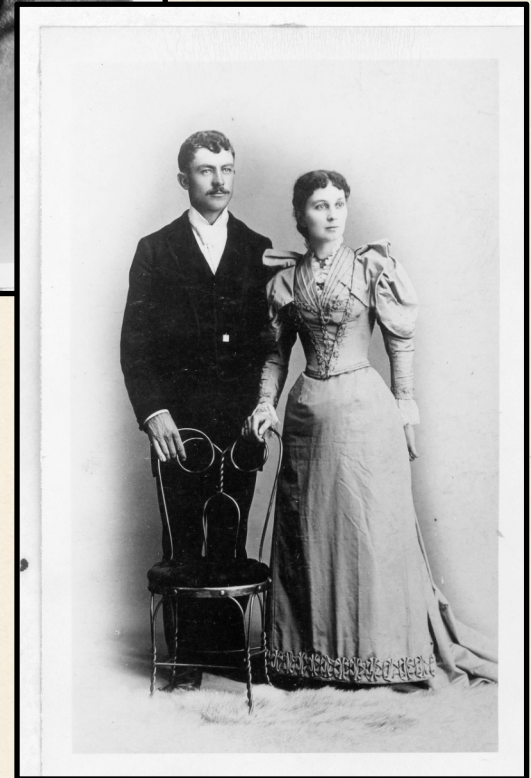
than twenty years, Frank Willis was prominent in his profession, as a churchman and as a citizen in the Cripple Creek District, and later in the "Tri-State" Mining Area at Baxter Springs, KS.

He was married three times:

On June 20, 1893 he married Frankie Louise Mills, born July 26, 1867, the daughter of James Franklin Mills and Mary Louise Young of Oxford, IN. She died Oct 22, 1901. They had two children, **Robert Mills Willis**, born Dec 12, 1894 in Cripple Creek CO, and **Orlo Frank Willis**, born March 18, 1901 in Cripple Creek.

On June 15, 1904 he married Maude Florence Jones, born Jan 6, 1877, the daughter of John W. Jones and Jennie Smith of Greeley CO. She died Dec 1922 in Baxter Springs. They had one child, **Earl Sidney Willis**, born June 30, 1910 in Cripple Creek.

On Aug 20, 1925 he married Mabel Rummel of Baxter Springs. They had one child, Charlotte Ann Willis, born Oct 19, 1931 in Baxter Springs.



FRANK GRIMES WILLIS 1867-1937

FRANCES LOUISE MILLS WILLIS 1867-1901

Their children, Robert Mills Willis and Orlo Frank Willis.

The Willis Family in Colorado

From a letter written by Frank Grimes Willis to his youngest son Sidney on April 12, 1925

Willet Ranney Willis, my father's father was a manufacturer of woolen goods at Adams, New York. He had a small mill which was run by water power. In those days it was the custom for farmers to raise a few sheep which they would shear in the Spring and take the wool to the mill where it was made into cloth, on shares, the man in the mill getting part for the manufacturing. When my grandfather became too old to conduct the business my father, Willet Ranney Willis Jr., purchased the mill and conducted it for a number of years.

He did splendidly until one day he discharged a rather weak minded young man, and that night this fellow set the place on fire. As it was not so customary to carry insurance then, Father lost heavily but went ahead and built up again and was doing well when the keeper of the gate up the river at the government dam, whose business it was to watch the rise of the river and open the flood gates when the water raised rapidly, went away to have a good time on the Fourth and the flood came, tore out the dam and rushing down, tore out the water wheel and part of Father's mill, leaving a lot of wet goods in the part of the mill that did not wash out. Father tried to set this stock out to save it and in so doing, working in the wet, caught cold and was sick and finally had to go to Colorado for his health, his lungs being affected.

When we left New York in November 1872, there were five of us little tots from six years down to six weeks. On the way out west we all came down with the whooping cough and we had a real time on that train. Each one had a bag of camphor around the neck and we took proper turns in coughing. On our arrival in Pueblo, which was then the railroad terminus, we were met by Uncle Robert Willis who was living near the Spanish Peaks.

While crossing the plains we saw herds of Buffalo and of Antelope and one of the herds of Buffalo I can see now in my mind as it stretched like a long dark winding string across the prairie, then when the train came close they started to run and some of the men shot some of them and the train was stopped to take them on. At Pueblo we stopped at a little hotel which I dimly remember, but some of us went up town and I remember going into a crockery store. The long shelves of dishes left such an impression on my mind that I could even recall the name of the owner many years later, and I found that it was a Mr. Miller with whom I later became well acquainted and who was the largest donor when the First Presbyterian Church was built in Pueblo.

From Pueblo we made the trip in covered wagons to what was then known as Spanish Peaks, the name given to the Post Office in the Cucharas Valley at the foot of those

grand peaks and about twelve miles from them. Here we found a large Plaza, known as the Francisco Plaza and owned by Col. John Francisco, Uncle Robert's brother-in-law. This had thick adobe walls on all sides, with but one gate. The walls were two feet or more in thickness and some of the houses are still standing, and are inhabited. The Plaza was square and all of the houses opened to the inside so they were protected from Indian attack. Later, in 1876, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad went through this area, and the town of LaVeta sprang up and this was our post address during all our younger years.

Our home for the present and our headquarter for some years was to be Uncle Robert's Ranch. Here we found an adobe house of three rooms, each some twenty feet square and each with a big fireplace. My parents had brought a cook stove and Uncle Robert had one, but they were among the very few in that country, most of the cooking being done over a fireplace using bake ovens of cast iron.

Coming as we did from Northern New York where the winters were very severe and long, we landed in a warm sunny climate where the children played out all winter, regardless of the whooping cough, and came to no harm. We were allotted the North room of the house and the little folks were well and happy, but the trials of the parents, especially the mother, who had been used to every convenience, must have been very hard. But she was ever cheerful and busy, though never at all strong, and cared for her little brood with wondrous devotion and success.

Father went into the sheep business and so we moved into the mountains in Summer where there was plenty of pasture, and then in Winter moved back to the valleys where the snow fall was less and the weather milder. At the time we arrived there was a large area which was claimed by the owners of the Vigil and St. Vrain Grant, one of the old Mexican grants which were to be recognized by the United States when the vast territory was taken over after

the Mexican War. Father felt that with his large family he could not take a chance in locating on the Grant, possibly later to be thrown off with all improvements a loss. A School Section was leased on the slopes north of the West Peak for one summer, and later, we moved to the old "Shut-In" ranch where father cared for a large band of horses.

During the two years we lived there the old house above the "Shut-in" was the scene and center of several episodes that were hard at the time, but which were parallel with the hardships endured by the pioneers during the settlement of the eastern part our country.

The "Shut-In" was a natural high stone wall (the Dakota Formation) which traverses the country for many miles in a generally north-south direction, appearing in Northern Colorado and near the Garden of the Gods near Colorado Springs, then near the Abeyta Mountain west of LaVeta and at this crossing of the Cucharas and extending for thirty miles or more southeast to give its name to the "Stonewall" country. The wall is of durable sandstone and extends along the hill top from each side of which the softer sediments have been eroded away. The wall is often forty or fifty feet high with occasional breaks where creeks have forced their way through it and it was the gap made by the Cucharas creek which was called the "Shut-in" and through which we passed to a point one mile south to our little home.

The country was wild. Deer passed by very often and grouse were seen whenever we left the main trails, and often while following these trails. Bear were often seen and sometimes quite bold. The fear that these animals would catch the little boys out after the cows, usually on foot and through the dense timber, caused Mother many uneasy hours, and I recall two of the boys were out after dark hunting the cows, and she could not hear the cowbell, so she put out the fires, shut the other children in the house, and went out to search for the little fellows whom she found

half a mile from home driving the cows that did not want to go the way the boys wished. It is hard to tell which, the mother or children, were happier when they heard the other's voice.

Another time while driving the cows home and riding a bare back pony, the animals all seemed very nervous and excited, some times stopping and sometimes wanting to run or dash off to one side, the little rider looked back and saw a large mountain lion slipping across the small ravine down which the cattle were going, then saw him up on one side, then on the other, but always closer, until finally the cattle saw him and all started on a stampede down the gulch, snorting and bawling with tails in the air.

Immediately the pony took the cue and followed while the small rider was clinging for dear life until they arrived near the ranch, glad to have had the experience but happier that it was over. The horses were sold soon after this and we returned to Uncle Robert's ranch for the winter, but not before a buffalo robe hanging on the fence frightened a young horse, causing him to dash into the house, knocking over little Rosabelle and breaking her finger, and stopping, with Anna the little baby, between his feet, but uninjured.

Father then took some sheep on shares and we lived for two years on the Santa Clara Creek, east of the East Peak. The coyotes kept killing the sheep, and after a heavy loss we moved back to Uncle Robert's ranch and built a log cabin of two rooms on the south end of this ranch. It was a good cabin, very neat and comfortable and was the place to which we returned several winters afterward while Mother taught school.

Our next move was to the "Spring Ranch" which was about six miles from the Post Office and was a good pasture country, but there was no land for farming or hay cutting, so after two winters we went to the Barnard and Whisenance ranch on the Cuahas for which Father traded \$300. worth of cattle. This was a fair mountain ranch but

unimproved except for a good four room log house with a lean-to bedroom for "the boys" where we slept for years. I recall hearing Mother say that she had moved every six months for six years or more, to school in the Fall and back to the ranch in the Spring, Father batched on the ranch to care for the stock and made weekly or fortnightly trips home. Each winter up to this time and for some years after we either had school in our kitchen or went to Uncle Robert's where we held school in the south room of his house.

When school was held in our kitchen, as soon as breakfast was over, the table was cleared and straightened and some benches were brought in and we and the neighbors' children sat down to studies under the care of Mother who did this beside caring for the six little folks' in her own home. How she managed to do it all is a wonder to me and I can see her now in my memory, teaching a class and attending to a pot of beans or potatoes or boiled beef on the kitchen stove which not only cooked the meal but heated the school room.

Mother did this because it was better for us to be in school, and then by teaching for three months she could earn one hundred dollars which helped a long way in clothing the growing youngsters. We attended this school right along and when were finally able to go to a school with regular hours and paraphernalia we each took our place right with children of our own age or older. Mother was afflicted with serious nervous headaches and at times had to dismiss school for the day and then "make up later". I can see that she did all this only because she let the older children assist the younger.

When school was held at our own home we boys were often called upon to help put on or remove a hay rack or to some other task which Father could not do alone, This a distraction and was something of a hindrance but was one of the things that could not be avoided, Under such adverse

conditions it might be expected that we would not progress rapidly but I think that Mother instilled into each one of us a desire to learn, and so when opportunity came we were ready to grasp it.

Although our parents tried to keep us studying more than the three months of the public school, it was very hard to do when there was so much for well grown boys to do in fencing the now place, looking after stock, clearing up the land and making it ready for crops. The ranch when we moved on to it consisted of possibly twenty acres of plowed land, five acres of meadow part of which was so rough it had to be cut with a scythe, and the remainder of brush and hill sides. We first fenced the tillable land, when not busy with crops, and then cleared a lot of the brush land and plowed it, gradually coming to the building of barn, sheds and corrals.

Father had several yoke of oxen and always four or more horses, and good wages were paid for hauling lumber from the old "Shut-In" ranch where Jasper Kirby had a saw mill, to the town of LaVeta which sprang up at the old Francisco Plaza in 1876-1877 when the railroad was built into the valley. The Spanish Peaks Post Office had passed into history and LaVeta became the center of distribution for the whole area. Our ranch was seven and one half miles from the town and all up hill. The saw mill was three miles farther south and we could make a trip each day with the horse team, but only two trips in three days, or sometimes four days with the oxen. But the oxen pulled a much larger load, so the profit was about the same.

The oxen were kept on the ranch for pulling the brush and the trees, and breaking up the new sod after the ground was cleared. The horses used in that section were mostly small half-breed Mexican or Indian ponies and were too small for heavy work. Good horses were so valuable that the poor rancher could not afford to risk having a good team stolen as was often done, so had to use the poorer animals. I

recall that Father bought two young colts and they grew to be good sized horses and made a fine team, but as soon as they were well broken he sold them, feeling that he could not afford to lose them, and in those Wild days horse stealing was as common as automobile stealing now. If caught the thief was much less leniently dealt with but with many miles of wild country and slow means of travel, and no telegraph or telephone, they were not often apprehended.

The winter after I was fifteen we had the first formal district school. It was held in what was called the "Smith" school house and the teacher was a man by the name of J.L. McLemore. This was the first teacher any of us had ever had except our mother. He held a temporary permit to teach and after two months took the county teacher's examination and after failing to pass, the school was closed. The school board wanted Mother to finish the school term but Willet was then very small so they finally decided to give me the job and a temporary certificate was obtained and I taught the extra month, so that the district could get the state money the next year, which would not have been possible if less than three months school had been held. The school, though a serious matter to the young teacher, was more or less of a farce, but served the purpose and the next year a competent teacher was engaged.

The next year Uncle Robert wished to visit in New York and he arranged with Father to look after his ranch, which he could do while Stanley and I were at home. But his visit of thirty days extended into sixty and then nearly ninety days, and school started in LaVeta which was but two and one half miles from Uncle Robert's ranch, so it was decided that I should start into school at LaVeta and attend to the ranch and that Father would come down at times and do what was too much for me.

When Uncle finally returned they had decided to send Mamie, his daughter, to the schools in Pueblo and her

mother was to remain with her, so Uncle Robert and myself spent the winter batching on his ranch and I walked the two and one half miles over and back. We had two cows to milk and some 35 head of goats, several work horses and a lot of stock cattle to feed, and keeping house kept me pretty busy.

Col. J.M. Francisco spent many nights at the ranch and he and Uncle played cribbage while I did my studying. Those evenings stand out in my mind, for when Col. Francisco was not there, I was called on one evening each week to read aloud the published sermons of Henry Ward Beecher. I would read with Webster's Unabridged Dictionary at my side and any word that I could not define when called on must be looked up in the dictionary. This reading was usually done on Friday night so my studies did not suffer greatly, but the drill has been a great help to me all the years since. Much of the next summer was spent on Uncle Robert's ranch making ditches, irrigating and putting up hay, My Job in the hayfield being largely stacking which had been taught me by a man who worked for Father one summer, and for this I received an extra 25 or 50 cents per day.

About this time and for a year or two previous, Father had been buying potatoes in the "Stonewall" country, hauling them across the mountains to our home where he sorted and stored them and then took them to LaVeta or to Walsenburg, the county seat, and sold them at a good advance in price. The freighting took a full day under favorable conditions. The snow usually fell in the mountains in October, or at latest in November, and, as the potatoes were not harvested until late in September, it meant winter hauling and some of the trips were severe trials to those doing the driving. I recall one trip when the icy roads caused the ox-drawn wagon and trailer to almost slip off the road, so we had to tie the wagon to trees on the upper side of the road and the moving the wagon a few feet, we transferred the ropes to other trees and then moved up as

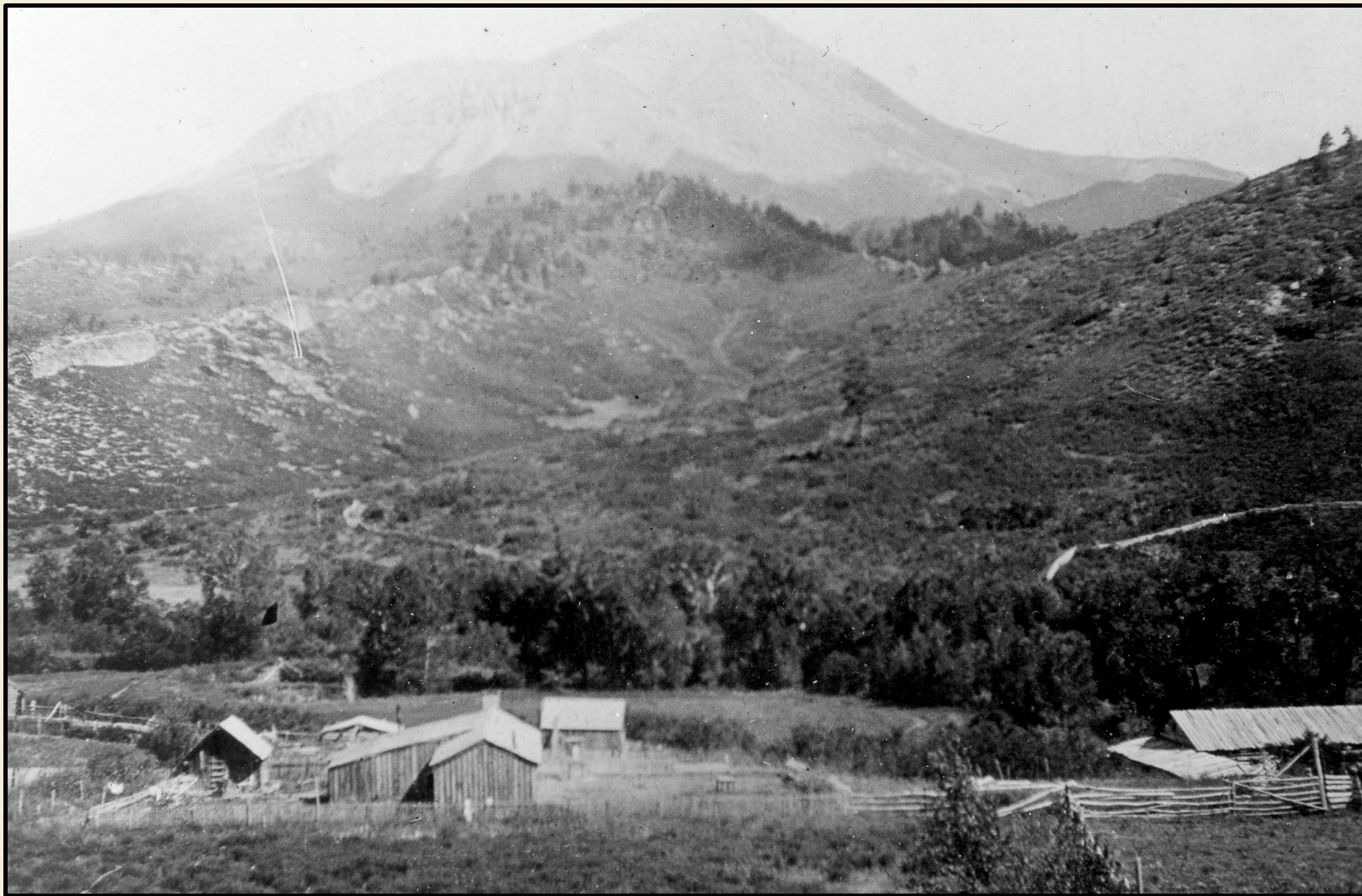
far as the ropes would allow and then again transfer to other trees. This operation took so long that night overtook us and we were compelled to camp for the night.

We spread a large tent over the wagon and out on the sides, and then built a fire under the wagon. The tent held the heat and kept the potatoes from freezing although it was a very cold night. We took turns, one watching the fire to see that it did not burn the wagon, the other gathering more wood. We drove the oxen to a ranch house nearby, and fed them. The potatoes were saved but the experience was long, one which was not cherished by the young boys engaged in it, though such hardships easily slip from young shoulders when the trials are only temporary, and leave no permanent ill effects.

It was about this time that Aunt Kate, Father's youngest sister, came west to visit and she urged the need of sending the children east to attend school, and set about making ways whereby this could be accomplished. It was arranged that Kittie should spend a year with Aunt Libby Coughlan in New York, or Flushing, and Belle with Aunt Maxy Hawley In Rochester, and they returned to the East with Aunt Kate and spent the year in these homes and in eastern schools.

Later in the fall Aunt Kate arranged for places for Stanlet and myself to work for board and room in Adams, NY, where she lived, and we drove to Pueblo and caught the Santa Fe train for Kansas City, the first train we had been on since our trip west when we were 3 and 5 respectively.

Arriving in Adams I went at once to work for Mr. J. I. Brown and Son, who operated a furniture and undertaking business, with whom I spent the winter. The family consisted of Mr. and Mrs Brown and an adopted daughter Susie. The son Walter was married and lived next door. Stanley stayed with Aunt Kate for a time and then worked



VIEW OF THE RANCH BUILDINGS AND THE VALLEY WITH THE WEST SPANISH PEAK IN THE BACKGROUND

for Dr Johnson and his wife who were very fine people.

We spent the summers working on farms, I with Mr. A.C. Dack and Stanley with a Mr. Welch and Mr. Cooper. The wages were small but helped greatly to piece out our small supply of cash. We spent three years there and during that time required practically no money from home at all. Our leaving the ranch had put the extra burden on Father of hiring help for work which we had done up to that time. In the meantime Ed who had been in Adams for several years returned to Colorado and was working In a general merchandise store in LaVeta.

Finally after our three years in Adams, Father was taken sick and we left for home in the Spring.

The Barnard or Whisenance Ranch was the last ranch home, and in fact the final home for the complete family. Edward stayed on the ranch less than two years, when Grandmother Willis who was quite feeble needed a young helper and he went to the old home in New York to be with her and was never at home for long after that. He remained with Grandmother until her death and then remained in Adams for some time making his home with Aunt Kate who was living at the old home.

The view from the house was grand and even as children we enjoyed seeing the sun come up over the "Peak" or as it went behind the mountains in the west we watched the shadows slowly climb the eastern slope until they slipped from the top of the Peak. Just across the Cucharas creek which flowed through the full length of the ranch, was a high hill which circles to the south and then easterly, forming a semicircle, and being so high would act as a fence behind which the cattle would be pastured in summer.

One of the favorite Sunday trips for Stanley and myself was a walk up to the pasture with a sack of salt. Arriving at

a good central place we would call the cattle and they would come running and lowing from distances of even a mile or more to get the salt. We would watch them for awhile and then climb the high cliff and sit for an hour or more just looking, looking over the mountains and sometimes rolling rocks down the mountain side. On one occasion we routed out a bear and watched him as he slipped from grove to grove until he passed into the heavy groves of White Peak two or more miles to the south.

THE NINTH GENERATION

Children of Frank Grimes Willis and Frankie Louise Mills

Robert Mills Willis, born December 12, 1894 in Cripple Creek, Colorado, Robert studied Civil Engineering and spent several years at in the Cripple Creek, Telluride, and Joplin Districts. On April 17, 1927 he was married to Velma Fern Elleiott, born February 9, 1905 at Columbus, KS. They had two children, Wilma Donan, born Aug 20, 1929 and Robert Frank, born July 12, 1933.

Orlo Frank Willis, born March 18, 1901 in Cripple Creek, CO. His mother died when he was only seven months old. His Grandmother Willis went to Cripple Creek and cared for him, and later took him to Colorado Springs where he lived with her and his Aunt Belle, attending school there until he was old enough to enter the South Western Branch of the Colorado A. & M. College near Durango. He became proficient in electrical work and practiced this in Colorado Springs and in Kansas City. In Kansas City he met Eleanor Englehardt, whom he married in August of 1923.

They had two children, Margaret Frances, born November 9, 1924 in Denver, CO; and Robert Grimes, born May 22, 1926 in Colorado Springs, CO.

Eleanor died soon after Robert's birth and the children were cared for by their Great Aunt Kate Willis Hills at her home in Concord, California, until their father

had established a new home after a second marriage (to Florence Taylor). In 1927 Orlo Willis was married to Florence Taylor Fox, who had a son, Bruce Fox, by a former marriage. The marriage took place in Albuquerque, NM. They lived for some time in Albuquerque and later in Trinidad, and then established a home in Colorado Springs CO. In 1933 the family moved from Colorado Springs to San Bernardino, CA, the old home of the Taylor family, and remained there permanently. Orlo set up his own electrical business in San Bernardino which he continued to operate until his death, March 6, 1944

Together, Orlo and Florence Taylor Willis had seven children;

Bruce Taylor Fox, Feb 14, 1922

Margaret Frances Willis, Nov. 9, 1924–Apr. 20, 2017

Robert Grimes Willis, May 22, 1926, Oct. 11, 1976

Lora Lea Willis, Sept. 25, 1927

Florence Shirley Willis, Sept 21, 1929–Mar. 10, 2003

Neil Taylor Willis, born Nov 21, 1931–Jan 22, 2009

Dorol Willis, born April 5, 1933–Jul. 20, 2019

Ronald Frank Willis, Nov 25, 1934–Apr. 20, 1935



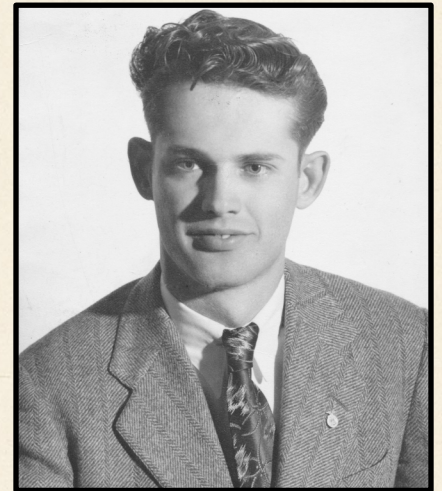
ELEANOR ENGLEHARDT WILLIS WITH MARGARET, ON THE LEFT. ORLO FRANK WILLIS,
FLORENCE TAYLOR WILLIS ON THE RIGHT

Lora Lea Willis was born in Trinidad CO, Sept 25, 1928. When she was five years old the family moved from Colorado Springs to San Bernardino, CA and she attended the San Bernardino schools, graduating from the High School there.

On April 23, 1948 she was married to Floyd Allan Hilbig who was born in San Bernardino Aug 21, 1926, the son of Ralph Allan Hilbig and Emma May Hargrave, both graduates of the University of Southern California School of Pharmacy and both registered pharmacists. Floyd Hilbig holds a degree from the California State Polytechnic College and also did graduate work at the Colorado A&M College in

Fort Collins CO. He was Chief Apiary Inspector for the State of Nevada, retiring in 1981.

Lora Lea and Floyd Hilbig are the parents of three boys:
David Allan, born Feb 19, 1951 in San Bernardino CA
Ronald James, born May 23, 1952 in Yerington NV
Richard Paul, born Aug 7, 1953 in Reno NV



THE ELEVENTH GENERATION

David¹¹ Allan Hilbig married Suki Lee Kim, born Jul. 15, 1954 on Nov 27, 1976. They have one daughter, Alicia Lee Hilbig.

Ronald¹¹ James Hilbig, married Debra Ann Torres Jan 3, 1998. They have one son, Christopher Addison, and three grandchildren, Cadence Angelina, Melody Autumn, and Koda Manuel.

Richard¹¹ Paul Hilbig, married Deborah Lee Krum, born Nov. 14, 1952 on April 10, 1976.

THE TWELTH GENERATION

Alicia Lee Hilbig, born Oct. 20, 1979

Christopher Addison Hilbig, born August 27, 1989 married Allison Wiltberger on Aug 21, 2020 in Chantilly VA.

They have three children, Cadence Bray born Nov 25, 2007 (mother Elizabeth Bray), Melody Autumn born Sept 26, 2018, and Koda Manuel born Nov 16, 2022







