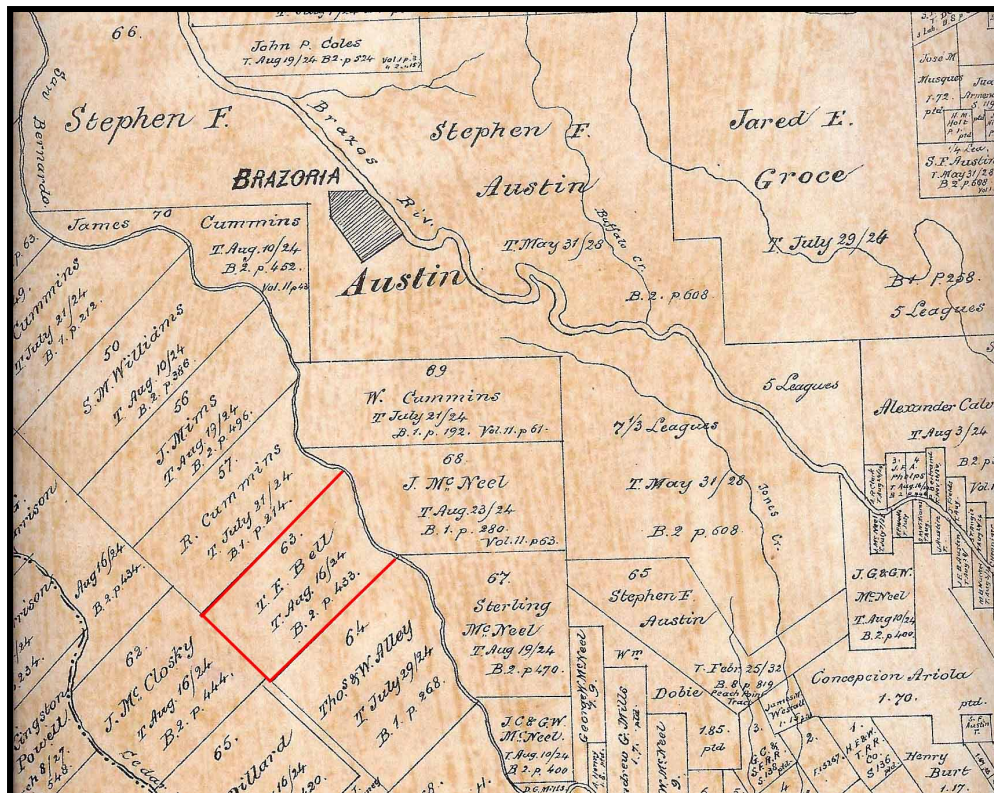


Thomas B. Bell Plantation & Hinkle's Ferry Brazosport Archaeological Society

Thomas Bolling Bell was a member of Stephen F. Austin's "Original 300 Families". According to family history the Bell family moved from Kentucky to Nacogdoches, Texas in 1822. The Thomas B. Bell family then moved several more times until they finally settled on the northeast corner of the league of land that had been granted Thomas B. Bell by the Mexican government in August 1824. The league lay on the west side of the San Bernard River about six miles southwest of the town of Brazoria. Bell had served in the Republic of Texas Army in 1835 and developed a modest plantation until his death in 1842. Nancy M. Bell and her children remained on the property with her son Christopher C. Bell keeping the plantation operational adding sugar as a cash crop in the late 1850's. The western third of the Bell League would become the sugar plantation of Shadrack Rowe and a ferry, Hinkle's Ferry, would be built by Samuel Hinkle just below the home site of the Bell family on the San Bernard River. After the Civil War the family continued to live on the property until after the turn of the century. With the death of Christopher C. Bell in 1907 ownership the property passed to his wife Katherine Jackson Bell and his daughter Emily A F. Bell. They sold the greater part of their remaining property to William H. Brigrance in 1909. In 1972 with the death of Emily A. Bell Gibson the family line of direct descendants of Thomas B. Bell ended. As part of her estate, the Bell homestead at that time only 100 acres was willed to the control of Annie Pearl Davis Baird, her niece. Annie Baird gave equal shares to her children and Laura Sharpe McCutchen sold the tract with the family graveyard and possible home site in 1999 to Patricia Williams Johnson.



Thomas B. Bell League Map 1879 The General Land Office of the State of Texas

Thomas Bolling Bell and Nancy M. Collins were wed April 15, 1818 Clark County, Kentucky. Their two oldest daughters Zerrilda¹ and Laura D. Bell would be born before the family moved from Kentucky to Nacogdoches, Texas April 15, 1822 (See Appendix A).² Their next child John Percy Bell was born in Nacogdoches. The family next moved to Cedar Bayou on Galveston Bay, thence to the junction of Buffalo and White Oak Bayou in what is now Harris County. Their next child Willis C. Bell was born in 1824 in Harris County. In 1825 they moved to Cedar Lake on the boarder between Brazoria and Matagorda County. On October 3, 1825 Thomas B. Bell headed a committee at Cedar Lake that wrote to Stephen F. Austin about the best means of contending with the Karankawa Indians.³ February 1826 Thomas B. Bell finally settled on the league of land in Brazoria County that had been granted to him by the Mexican government August 16, 1824. Here they settled on the west bank of the San Bernard River ~six miles southwest of the town of Brazoria. Thomas and Nancy chose the northeast corner of the league bordering on the river to build their home and start their plantation. They would have five more children born to the family in Brazoria County.⁴ The 1826 Texas census lists Bell as a farmer and stock raiser aged between twenty-five and forty, with a wife the same age, and three children one to seven years of age (Indicates John Percy Bell had died since the other 3 children born by this date reach maturity.).

One of the early visitors to the Thomas B. Bell home was Noah Smithwick, who traveled Stephen F. Austin's colony picking up odd work as a blacksmith where he could. He was staying with Johnnie McNeel⁵ when he first met Thomas B. Bell and accepted an invitation to his home. This may have been as early as the spring of 1827:

...I found him (Thomas B. Bell) living on the San Bernard, domiciled in a pole-cabin in the midst of a small clearing upon which was a crop of corn. His wife, every inch a lady, welcomed me with as much cordiality as if she were mistress of a mansion. There were two young children and they, too, showed in their every manner the effects of gentle training. The whole family were dressed in buckskin, and when supper was announced, we sat on stools around a clapboard table, upon which were arranged wooden platters. Beside each platter lay a fork made of a joint of cane. The knives were of various patterns, ranging from butcher knives to pocket-knives. And for cups, we had little wild cymplings⁶, scraped and scoured until they looked as white and clean as earthenware, and the milk with which the cups were filled was as pure and sweet as mortal ever tasted. The repast was of the simplest, but served with as much grace as if it had been a feast, which, indeed, it became, seasoned with the kindly manners and pleasant conversation of those two entertainers. Not a word of apology was uttered during my stay of a day and a night, and when I left them I did so with a hearty invitation to repeat my visit. It so happened that I never was at their place again, but was told that in the course of time the pole cabin gave place to a handsome brick house and that the rude furnishings were replaced by the best the country boasted, but I'll venture to say that the host and hostess still retained their old hospitality unchanged by change of fortune.⁷

¹ Many different spellings for her name in the records. This one comes from her gravestone and a signature by her in last accounting of her brother, Willis C. Bell's probate, Record of Wills: D 198.

² Thomas B. Bell File, Stephen F. Austin's Three Hundred Families, Brazoria County Historical Museum, Angleton, Texas

³ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/BB/fbe40.html> (accessed August 18, 2009). (NOTE : "s.v." stands for sub verbo, "under the word.")

⁴ Thomas B. Bell File, Stephen F. Austin's Three Hundred Families, Brazoria County Historical Museum, Angleton, Texas

⁵ Johnnie McNeel lived opposite the San Bernard River from Thomas B. Bell.

⁶ Wild squash

⁷ Smithwick, Noah, *The Evolution of a State*, Steck-Vaughn Company, Austin, Texas, 1968, p.38.

June 20, 1832 “Thos. B. Ball [Bell] is listed by Mirabeau Lamar as a member of the “Military” organized at Brazoria.⁸ June 25, 1832, Thomas B. Bell is again listed as one of the “Texas Volunteers” in camp preparing to assault Fort Velasco at the mouth of the Brazos River garrisoned by Mexican troops.⁹ Bell was at first Captain of the 2nd Division until he was removed from his post: “the circumstances of Mr. Thos. Bell’s [Bell] being broke of his office as Capt. of the Rifle Corps., 2nd Division by a large majority of his men, for being rash, impetuous and incapable of commanding his men in a judicious manner, in place of which Henry Smith was unanimously elected.”¹⁰ Thomas B. Bell and a group of 38 men were detailed for the Schooner *Brazoria* commanded by William J. Russell.¹¹ Bell is later listed as “Comedant” of the new 4th Division before the Battle of Velasco began on June 26, 1832.¹² After the successful assault of the fort by the Texans most of the men returned to their homes and awaited the repercussions from the Mexican government. Luckily diplomatic dialogue smoothed the incident over.

Thomas B. Bell served in the Texas Army during the siege of Bexar from the 28th of September until his honorable discharge on December 14, 1835 signed by Edward Burleson, Commander in Chief of the Volunteers. L. B. Franks Lieutenant Colonel of the Artillery wrote on his discharge papers : “Nov. 28 I do hereby certify that Thos. Burleson was appointed Capt. of the six lb. cannon known as the Harrisburg Six & volunteered to storm Bexar & was in during the siege & acted brave and honorable Dec. 14th 1835 “. ¹³

The 1840 Tax Record lists Thomas B. Bell with a league of land, 4 Negroes, 2 mules, and 25 head of cattle on his property. After his death in 1842 Nancy M. Bell was appointed executrix of Christopher C. Bell’s estate and Samuel Hinkle later became the guardian of the under age Bell children. Samuel Hinkle married Laura D. Bell on September 21, 1843. Property remaining in the estate January 1849:

1 League and the plantation

Negroes: John 35 yrs old

Mary 27 “ “

Lucy 6 “ “

Grace 4 “ “

Dick 2 “ “

30 head of cattle

1 old mule

1 old horse¹⁴

Nancy M. Bell petitioned the court to have the property be partitioned among the children and herself. At this time there were five children still living: Zerrilda Bell, Laura D. (Mrs. Samuel) Hinkle, Willis C. Bell, Emily A. Bell, and Christopher C. Bell. Andrew Churchill, John James, and John S. McNeel were appointed by the court to make a partition of the Thomas B. Bell Estate. They decided that the plantation could not be divided equitably, and so they allotted Nancy M. Bell 1/6 of the league plus the plantation where Thomas lived at the time of his death,

⁸ Gulick, Charles A. Jr., et al (eds.) , The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 6 Vol., I, p. 97.

⁹ Ibid., p. 103

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 116

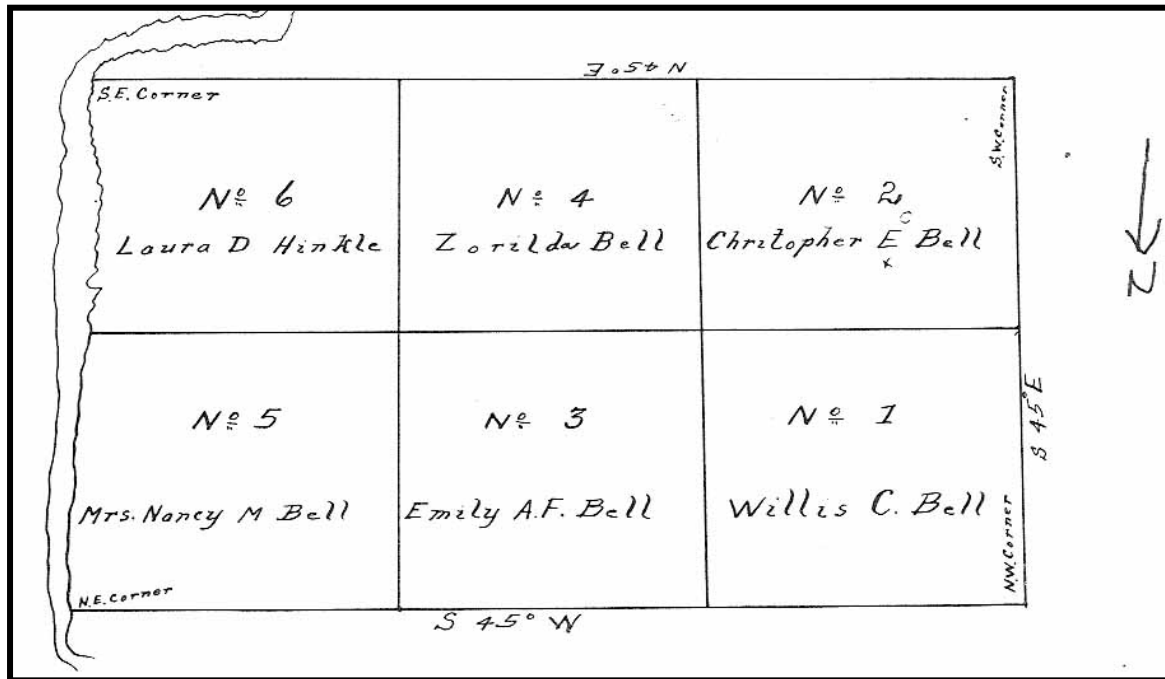
¹¹ Ibid., p. 110.

¹² Ibid., p. 112.

¹³ Republic of Texas Claims, Texas State Archives

¹⁴ Thomas B. Bell Probate Case 34/50, County Clerk’s Office, Brazoria County Courthouse, Angleton, Texas

the slaves, and livestock. Each of the surviving children received 1/6 of land or roughly 738 acres each.¹⁵ Willis C. Bell in March 1849 bonded himself to sell his tract to Shadrack Rowe for \$3396.00.¹⁶ Shadrack Rowe moved his large family to this tract of land and built a cotton and sugar plantation.



Partition of Thomas B. Bell League February 1849¹⁷

The 1850 Agricultural Census lists the plantation under Christopher Bell who would have been only seventeen at the time. There were 100 improved acres with the value of the farm at \$2500 and \$600 worth of farm machinery. The livestock consisted of 2 horses, 3 mules, 10 milch cows, 2 working oxen, 35 head of cattle, and 50 swine. For 1849 he produced 600 bushels of corn, 10 of Irish potatoes, 400 of sweet potatoes, 120 pounds of butter, and 2 ½ tons of hay. The 1850 Federal Census lists the Bell family:

Christopher Bell (Farmer)	18M	Texas (Should have been 17)
Nancy Ann Bell	45 F	Kentucky (Should have been 55)
Zerilda Bell	19 F	Kentucky (Should have been 31)
Emily A. Bell	17 F	Texas (Should have been 20) ¹⁸

February 1854 Laura D. Bell Hinkle died intestate without any children. The Bell family sued Samuel Hinkle for a portion of the Bell land that had been rendered to Laura.¹⁹ John B.

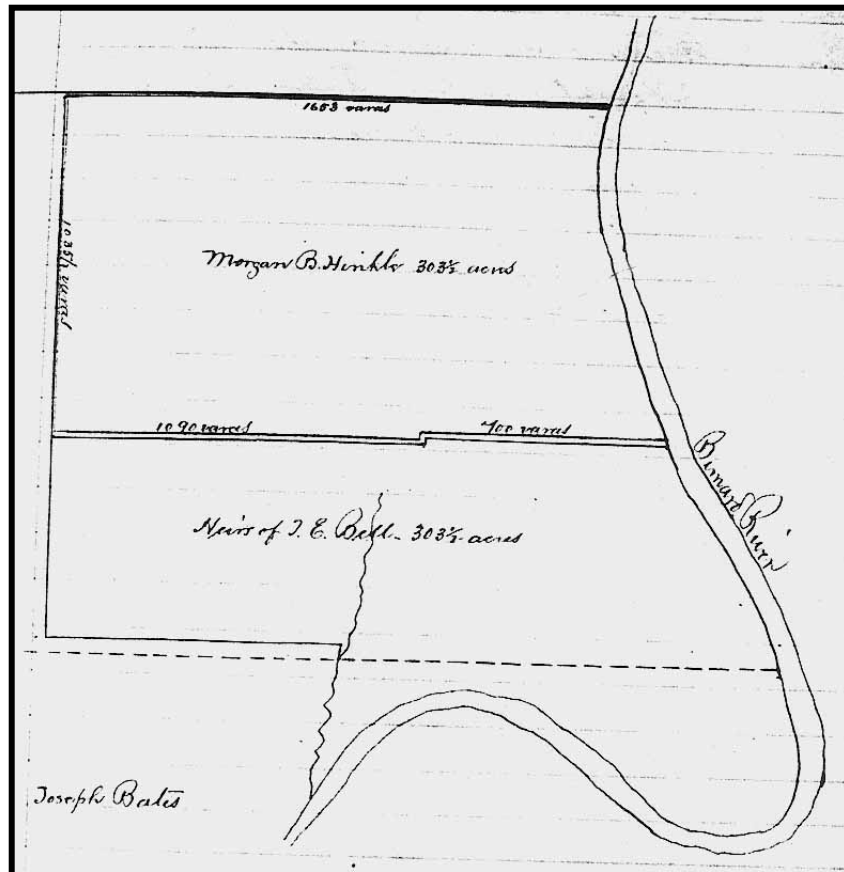
¹⁵ Brazoria County Deed Record: H 414/18

¹⁶ BCDR: H 402/03

¹⁷ BCDR: H 416 Notice that North is toward the bottom of the map.

¹⁸ Willis C. Bell, aged 24 born in Texas, is listed in the Samuel Hinkle household and his sister, Laura.(Should be 26)

Norris, Shadrack Rowe, and Andrew Churchill were appointed by the court to divide the property. Samuel Hinkle received the northern half of Tract 6 which included all the valuable improvements he had made on the property and the Bell heirs received the southern half.²⁰ Samuel Hinkle had built a home and a ferry for crossing the San Bernard River on his property.



Hinkle and Bell Division Later Plat 1878²¹

Christopher C. Bell petitioned the court August 28, 1855 to have his brother Willis C. Bell declared insane. The court had Willis C. Bell placed under arrest and brought before a jury and Dr. R. H. Chinn the next day. Dr. Chinn and the jury declared Willis C. Bell a maniac or madman. Christopher C. Bell was made guardian of Willis C. Bell who was declared *non compos mentis*. Willis C. Bell was held in jail for 123 days at \$.75/day. December 1855 Christopher C. Bell and his brother Willis took the stage to Galveston and stayed at the Washington Hotel the day before they embarked for New Orleans on their way to Lexington, Kentucky. Christopher paid \$154.00 for six months board and clothing at the Eastern Kentucky Lunatic Asylum in Lexington.²² As guardian for Willis C. Bell, Christopher C. Bell made out a

¹⁹ *Nancy M. Bell et al vs Samuel Hinkle* Civil Court Case 2058, Brazoria County District Clerk's Office, Brazoria County Court House, Angleton, Texas

²⁰ BCDR: J 267/68

²¹ BCDR: S 79

²² Willis C. Bell Probate Case 587, Brazoria County Clerk's Office, Brazoria County Court House, Angleton, Texas

note for \$110-\$160 every six months for the care of his brother.²³ By 1860 the price had raised to \$260/six months clothing separate.²⁴ As guardian he made out the deed to Shadrack Rowe for his brother's Tract 1 in March 1858.²⁵ September 1858 C. C. Bell sold his Tract 2 to Rowe for \$7015.00 giving Rowe ownership of the western 1/3 of the Thomas Bell League.²⁶

The 1860 Agricultural Census lists C.C. Bell with 110 improved acres and the value of the farm at \$13,300 with \$600 worth of farm machinery. Livestock on the property were listed as 3 horses, 4 mules, 10 milch cows, 6 work oxen, 50 head of cattle, and 30 swine. He produced in 1849 700 bushels of corn, 6 of Irish potatoes, 150 of sweet potatoes, 75 pounds of butter, 1 ton of hay, 15 bales of cotton, 50 hogsheads of sugar, and 4000 gallons of molasses. The 1860 Slave Census lists only 6 slaves with 1 slave dwelling. The small number of slaves, of which only half were old enough for farm labor, could not have been Bell's only source of manpower nor does the value of farm machinery match someone that is producing sugar. He may have been in a business deal with Shadrack Rowe as Rowe was a consistent sugar producer in the late 1850's. However, Abner Strobel describes the Christopher Bell Plantation as "...a sugar plantation—well improved—brick residence and the necessary improvements for a well conducted plantation".²⁷



Bell Plantation Home Unknown Date Courtesy of Brazoria County Historical Museum²⁸

²³ Record of Wills: B 377 & 755

²⁴ Willis C. Bell Probate Case 587, Brazoria County Clerk's Office, Brazoria County Court House, Angleton, Texas

²⁵ BCDR: H474/76

²⁶ BCDR: H 587/88

²⁷ Strobel, Abner J., The Old Plantations and Their Owners of Brazoria County, Texas, Union National Bank, Houston, Texas, 1930, p.12.

²⁸ Photo Collection Brazoria County Historical Museum, Photo 1996.013p.0001

The 1860 the Christopher C. Bell household listed in the 1860 Federal Census:

C.C. Bell (Planter)	27 M	Texas
Nancy M. Bell	60 F	Kentucky
Zarilda Bell	38 F	Kentucky
Emily A. F. Bell	29 F	Texas
Willis C. Bell	34 M	Texas

During the Civil War Willis C. Bell would die in August 1862 in the insane asylum in Lexington, Kentucky. The Bell family did not learn of his death for over two years and he was buried in Kentucky. His estate paid \$133.33 for his tombstone.²⁹

Christopher C. Bell continued to farm the family land after the Civil War. Nancy M. Bell's two daughters, Zerrilda and Emily A. F. Bell, also remained at the home and neither married.



Photo of Nancy M. Bell Unknown Date Courtesy of the Brazoria County Historical Museum³⁰

A child aged four, Alice Baily had been adopted by 1870. Alice is also listed with the family in 1880 (No further data). In July 1884 first Zerrilda and then a week later her mother Nancy died. While Zerrilda has the only tombstone legible still remaining in the family cemetery both were probably buried there.

After the death of his mother and sister, Christopher C. Bell began to court Katherine Jackson, often called Katie. Orphaned Katie had grown up at the Levi Jordan Plantation with the Jordan-McNeill family. Letters written by C. C. Bell in July 1887 to Katie Jackson show a relationship that was somewhat strained (not wearing her engagement ring in public) but August 11, 1887 they were married, he at age 54 and she at 28.³¹ June 1888 their only

²⁹ Willis C. Bell Probate Case 587, Brazoria County Clerk's Office, Brazoria County Court House, Angleton, Texas

³⁰ Photo Collection Brazoria County Historical Museum, Photo 1996.013p.0006 from ambrotype thought to be Nancy M. Bell (I think the picture has a resemblance to Katie Jackson Bell and could be her mother)..

³¹ Letters C. C. Bell to Miss Katie Jackson, Columbia, Texas, 14 & 21 July 1887, Thomas B. Bell File, Stephen F. Austin's Three Hundred Families, Brazoria County Historical Museum, Angleton, Texas

child Emily A. Bell was born. Family record indicates that Katie referred to her husband as “Mr. Bell”.



Photo of Katherine Jackson Bell Unknown Date
Courtesy of the Brazoria County Historical Museum³²

In 1890 Christopher C. Bell’s sister, Emily A. F. Bell died leaving Christopher the sole heir to the old plantation. Though a few small tracts had been sold over the years a substantial amount of the property was still held by Bell.



Photo Christopher C. Bell, Katie Jackson Bell, their daughter Emily A. Bell and Unknown Boy
Unknown date Courtesy of the Brazoria County Historical Museum³³

³² Photo Collection Brazoria County Historical Museum, Photo 1996.013p.0003

³³ Photo Collection Brazoria County Historical Museum, Photo 1996.013p.0004

After the turn of the century in 1907 Christopher C. Bell died with his wife Katie and daughter Emily inheriting ~ 1/2 of a league of land.³⁴ According to family records the family home had burned down in 1906 (Not sure who in the family recorded this date or how factual).

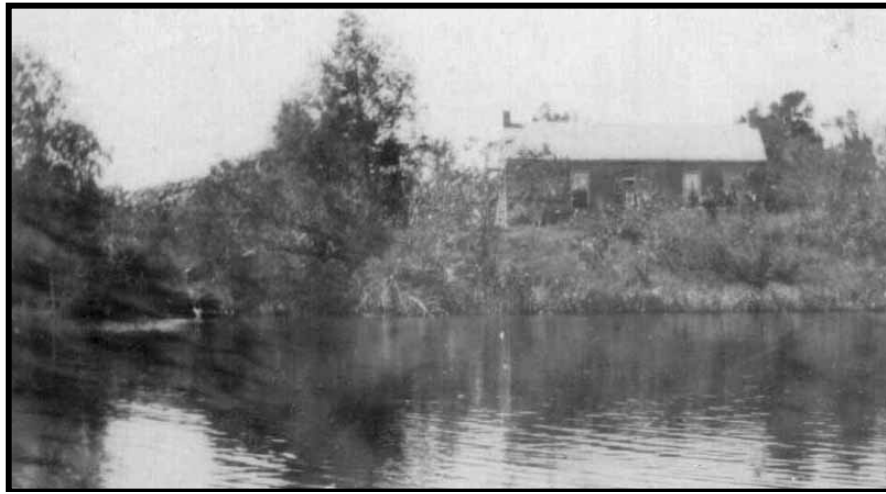
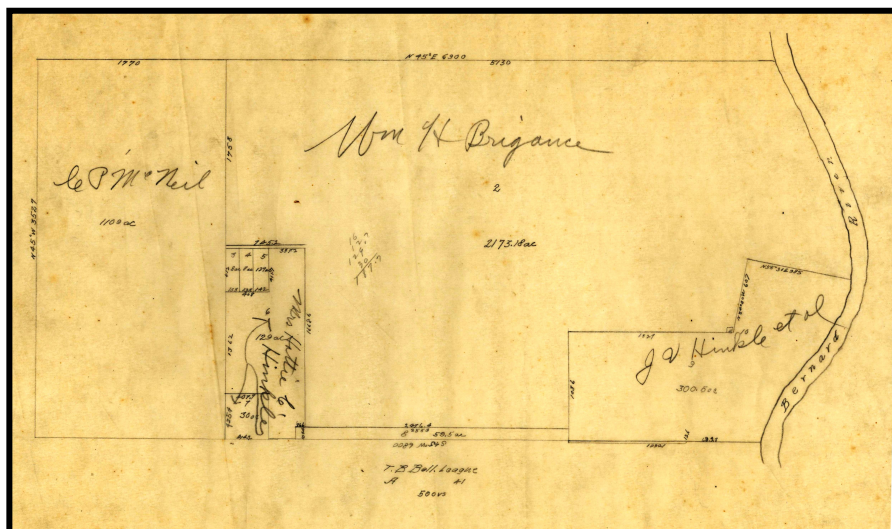


Photo Christopher C. Bell Home as viewed from across the San Bernard River
Unknown date Courtesy of the Brazoria County Historical Museum³⁵

May 1909 Katie and Emily Bell sold most of their remaining land, 2174 acres, excluding their 100 acre homestead to William H. Brigrance for almost \$30,000.³⁶ Brigrance and his wife a few years later sold out to what became the San Bernard Syndicate which divided the land into large tracts for real estate development.³⁷



³⁴ Christopher C. Bell Probate Case 1572, Brazoria County Clerk's Office, Angleton, Texas

³⁵ Photo Collection Brazoria County Historical Museum, Photo 1996.013p.0002

³⁶ BCDR: 89 108/12

³⁷ BCDR: 126 212/15

Map ~1910 Thomas B. Bell League Courtesy of the Brazoria County Historical Museum³⁸

First Emily and then Katie moved to Galveston where Emily married Julian J. Gibson in 1916. In 1921 the Gibson family with Katie Bell moved to Houston.



Emily A. Bell Gibson Unknown Date



Julian J. Gibson Unknown Date ³⁹

In 1941 the Gibson's only child, Kathlyn, died of an allergic reaction to sulfa drugs in her early twenties. After the death of her mother and her husband Emily A. Bell Gibson lived alone. Her property at the time of her death in 1972 was passed to her niece, Annie Pearl Davis Baird.⁴⁰ With the passing of Emily came the end of the Thomas B. Bell line of succession. Annie gave the 100 acre homestead to her children. Laura Sharpe McCutchen sold the tract with the family graveyard and possible home site to Patricia Williams Johnson in 1999.⁴¹ Laura Sharpe McCutchen has donated many of the photos and documents left by Emily A. Bell Gibson to the Brazoria County Historical Museum in Angleton, Texas.

³⁸ Map 1988.070c.0223Brazoria County Historical Museum, Angleton, Texas does not show the Bell Homestead.

³⁹ Photo Collection Brazoria County Historical Museum, Photo 1996.013p.0009 & 0010

⁴⁰ BCDR: 1138 340/47

⁴¹ BCDR: 199900630



Photo August 29, 1998 Courtesy of Johnny T. Pollan

The family graveyard, heavily overgrown, was visited by the Brazosport Archaeological Society in 1998 and pictures were taken of the area. Other tombstones were present but indiscernible. It should be speculated that there are several members of the Bell family buried here. The graveyard is now in the yard of Patricia Williams Johnson's home. The location of the house site has not definitely been determined at this time.

Another location of interest in the Thomas B. Bell League is Hinkle's Ferry located on the San Bernard River just below the homestead of the Bell family. Samuel Hinkle before his marriage to Laura D. Bell had been a member of the Texas Army from July 1, 1836 until his honorable discharge October 4, 1836.⁴² Joseph I. George and Samuel Hinkle had leased a plantation near Chance's Prairie for the year 1841 from E. M. Pease. Hinkle lived on the property and was required to make repairs on the dwelling house, slave cabins, and gin as well as pay \$455/year. Later he served in Captain John P. Gill's Mounted Volunteers from Columbia in the Vasquez Expedition March 20, 1842 until June 20, 1842.⁴³ In September 1843 he wed Laura D. Bell and moved to the tract of land on the San Bernard River that she would inherit from her father's estate. The 1850 Federal Census lists his household:

Samuel Hinkle (Farmer)	45M	North Carolina
Laura D. Hinkle	29 F	Kentucky
Willis C. Bell	24 M	Texas (Laura's brother)

Samuel Hinkle remained on the property after the death of his wife Laura D. Bell in 1854. Samuel's brother, Morgan B. Hinkle with his wife Cornelia and their family arrived in Texas in the fall of 1856 staying with Samuel. Morgan B. Hinkle bought property in Matagorda County near Cedar Lake and moved his family there in the fall of 1858.

Samuel Hinkle maintained the ferry and the road from Hinkle's Ferry to Cedar Lake in 1858. The county commissioners fixed the following rates:

Wagon and 4 horses	\$1.75
Wagon and 3 horses	1.50
Wagon and 2 horses	1.25

⁴² Republic of Texas Claims, Texas State Archives

⁴³ Ibid.

Buggy	1.00
Man on a horse	.50
Led horse	.25
Footman	.10 ⁴⁴

Samuel Hinkle built up his ferry business and had a small cotton plantation. According to the 1860 Slave Census he had 9 slaves with 3 slave dwellings. His farm had 110 improved acres with \$1000 worth of farm machinery listed in the 1860 Agricultural Census. In 1859 he produced 56 bales of cotton up from 3 bales he produced in 1849.

After the Civil War in 1866 Samuel Hinkle sold a large portion of his land and livestock to his brother Morgan B. Hinkle who had been living with his family in Matagorda County before the Civil War.⁴⁵ Two years later Samuel sold his brother "Homestead tract of land of Samuel Hinkle on the west bank of the San Bernard River on which I now reside and known as the "Hinkle's Ferry Place" containing 200 acres including my residence, and all out-buildings and improvements. Also the Ferry landing, Ferry boat and Ferry privileges known as "Hinkle's Ferry"...Also my household furniture which is of little value."⁴⁶ He had been granted a license for the ferry in 1868 (At this time Samuel may have been in bad health and died not long after August 28, 1868. The grave sites of Samuel and Laura D. Hinkle are unknown).

In 1870 Morgan B. Hinkle with his family was now living at the ferry landing:

Morgan Hinkle (Farmer)	66M	North Carolina
Cornelia Hinkle	40 F	Alabama
Ella Hinkle	15 F	Alabama
James Hinkle	13M	Alabama
Samuel Hinkle	11M	Texas
Henrietta McCantry (Governess)	18 F	Louisiana

Ella Hinkle married Charles Philip McNeil on October 22, 1874. Charles P. McNeill was the son of James Calvin McNeill (d. 1854) and Emily Jordan McNeill and had been raised on the Levi Jordan Plantation. He and his brother James Calvin McNeill had bought the Shadrack Rowe Plantation in the western 1/3 of the Bell League.

The last time that Morgan B. Hinkle renewed the ferry license at Hinkle's Ferry was 1875. After the death of Morgan B. Hinkle in June 1875 Cornelia and her sons sold the property to Ella Hinkle McNeill in 1878.⁴⁷ Charles and Ella McNeill would reside at the old ferry crossing with the Hinkle family.⁴⁸ According to some family records they built a large two story wooden frame home just below the old ferry crossing on the west side of the San Bernard River the mid-late 1870's.

⁴⁴ Hudgins, Edgar H., Hudgins Virginia to Texas, Larksdale Press, Houston, Texas, 1983, p. 207.

⁴⁵ BCDR: K 614/15

⁴⁶ BCDR: L 283/84

⁴⁷ BCDR: S 79/80 & S 80/81

⁴⁸ Raska, Ginny McNeill and Mary Lynne Gasaway Hill, The Uncompromising Diary of Sallie McNeill 1858-1867, Texas A & M University Press, College Station, Texas, 2009, pp. 155-56.



Charles P. McNeill Home Unknown Date West Side of San Bernard River⁴⁹

The 1880 Federal Census lists the C. P. McNeill household and Charles P. McNeill's occupation as a farmer producing sugar giving an indication that the sugar mill on the old Rowe Plantation was still operational:

C.P. McNeill (Farmer-Sugar)	38M	Louisiana
Ella McNeill (Keep House)	25 F	Alabama
C. P. McNeill	4M	Texas
Emily McNeill(Mother)	60 F	Georgia

Sarah Jordan (grandmother), Charlie and Calvin Martin (his young nephews) were also living in a dwelling next to Charles P. McNeill. Several domestic servants were also quartered in the vicinity.

⁴⁹ Photo 2005.016p.0025, Brazoria County Historical Museum, Angleton, Texas.



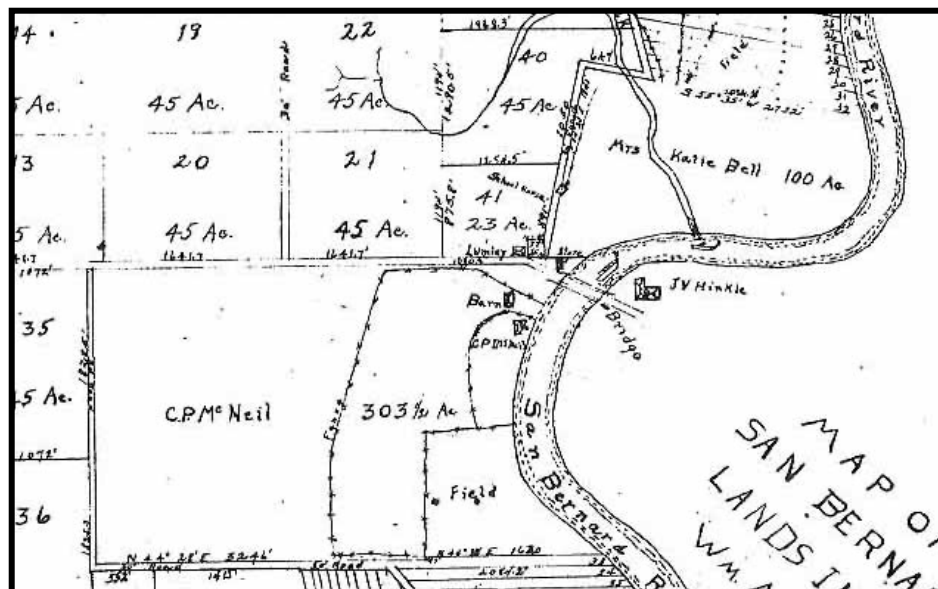
Charles P. McNeill Home Built ~1870's Photo ~1890 Facing the Prairie
Courtesy Brazoria Historical Museum

James Varian Hinkle, son of Morgan B. and Cornelia Hinkle married Harriet Hite Cox in 1879 and remained at Hinkle's Ferry becoming a merchant. His brother Samuel B. Hinkle died in 1882 and was buried next to his father in Cedar Lake Cemetery.⁵⁰ A community later grew up around the ferry crossing. James Varian Hinkle was postmaster and general-store owner in 1884, when the community shipped cotton, sugar, and molasses. The community's post office was established in 1877 and was discontinued in 1914. By 1896 the community had a population of thirty-five, a gristmill and gin, several general stores, and a Methodist church. That year Hinkle's Ferry also had a school with one teacher and eleven students.⁵¹ The following plat notes the school house, ferry, and homes in the area. James V. Hinkle started to buy tracts of land on the opposite side of the river in 1882 in the John S. McNeel League.⁵²

⁵⁰ Hudgins, Edgar H., Hudgins Virginia to Texas, Larksdale Press, Houston, Texas, 1983, p. 212.

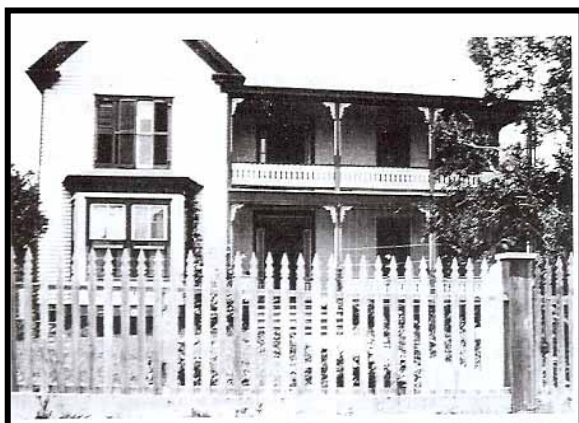
⁵¹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/HH/hnh30.html> (accessed August 22, 2009). (NOTE: "s.v." stands for sub verbo, "under the word.")

⁵² BCDR: W 292, W 303, W 166, U 32/33 & X 687.



Plat Map ~ 1910 BCDR: 2 135

In 1894 he built a new wooden frame home on the east bank of the San Bernard River across from their store. According to the family record when meals were ready, a bell was rung so that he could either row himself across the river in a skiff or ride the ferry while working at the store and landing on the west bank.⁵³



James V. Hinkle Home ~1918
East Bank of the San Bernard River⁵⁵



James V. Hinkle Home 1985⁵⁴

James and Hattie Hinkle would have seven children born to them (See Appendix B). James V. Hinkle built a thriving business at Hinkle's Ferry. In addition to his store and ferry business he purchased and operated three sailing schooners, the *Matilda* a three-masted schooner

⁵³ Hudgins, Edgar H., *Hudgins Virginia to Texas*, Larksdale Press, Houston, Texas, 1983, p. 213.

⁵⁴ *The Brazosport Facts*, July 31, 1985

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 215

(75 bales cotton capacity), the *Rosalie* a two-masted (50 bale capacity), and the *Josephine O.* These schooners made the trip to Galveston on a regular basis.⁵⁶



James Varian Hinkle Family in 1887
Back Row L to R: J. V. Hinkle, Alma Hinkle, Hattie Cox Hinkle;
Front Row L to R: Ella McNeill Hinkle, James Thomas Hinkle, Minnie Bell Hinkle⁵⁷

J. V. Hinkle and Hattie Cox Hinkle decided to divide their property equally February 15, 1926 after having been separated for more than three years. Hattie received their home place. James V. Hinkle eventually remarried and moved to Brownwood, Texas where he died in 1945.⁵⁸

After the death of Charles P. McNeill the old Hinkle homestead was partitioned between Ella, his wife and his two children Perry and Helen McNeill by the probate court in 1943.⁵⁹ The original home site was inherited by Lolita Ruth McNeill Muhm in 1975. According to her husband Robert Muhm the original Charles P. McNeill wood frame home may have sat very near

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 212.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 214.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 217.

⁵⁹ Probate Record 16 45

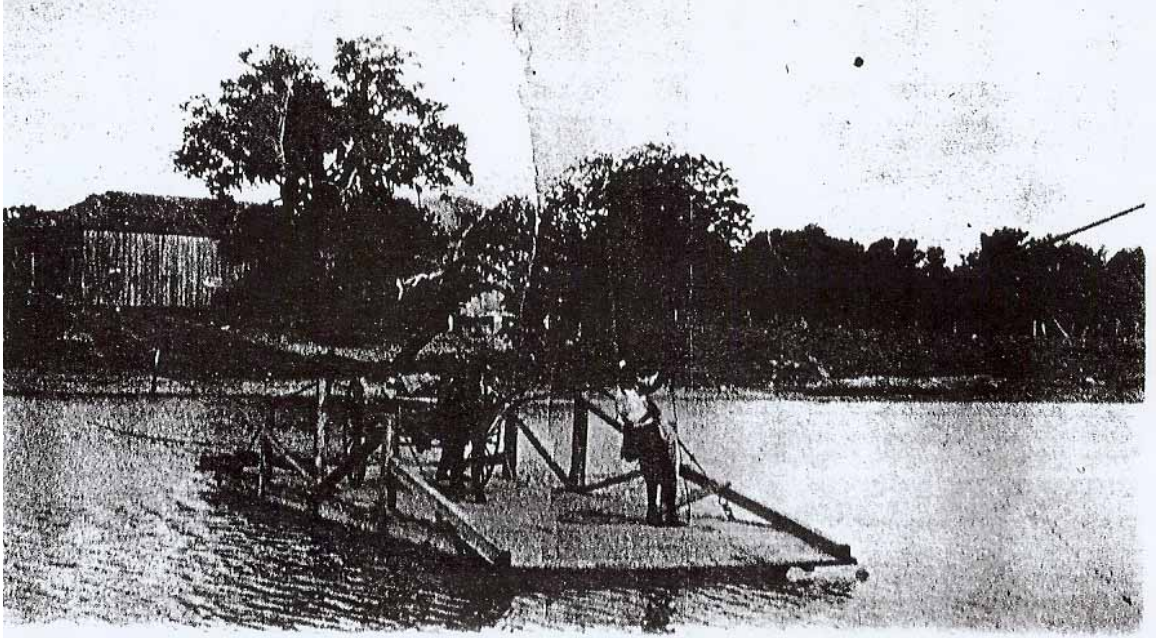
the Samuel Hinkle residence as there was a brick cistern which was used by the family which sat in a corner of an ell of the old home. The water was hand pumped and used by the McNeill family after all the wiggle tails had been strained out. The wood frame home was torn down ~1930 and the brick home in which Bob and Lolita Muhm now live was built partially over the same brick cistern.



Photograph Circa 1890 of Charles P. McNeill Home from the San Bernard River ⁶⁰

Hinkle's Ferry was in operation into the 1920's. A wooden bridge replaced the ferry as a continuation of CR 310. Later in July 1958 the Sportsman Span Bridge was completed just down stream of the old ferry location on FM 2611.

⁶⁰ Bob and Lolita Muhm have the original photos of this poor copy and the copy on page 13 .



Hinkle's Ferry in the 1920's⁶¹

There should be a number of archeological sites in the area of the original Hinkle homestead. In addition to the home sites of Samuel Hinkle and Charles P. McNeill in Tract 10 a brick cistern and brick foundations are visible across FM 309 from the old Hinkle store.



Brick Cistern, Foundations and Sugar Kettle on Tract 10 August 2009

⁶¹ *The Brazosport Facts*, July 31, 1985

This map while at a post 1910 date shows the James Varian Hinkle home on the east side of the San Bernard, the Charles P. McNeill home opposite on the west side of the San Bernard, and a structure on the Bell homestead tract which may be the Bell home. This is at a later date than the supposed burning of the structure in 1906. According to the photographs of the Bell home it may be located on the north side of Bell Creek at its juncture into the San Bernard River.



Map Courtesy of the Brazoria County Historical Museum, 1988.070c.0108-2



Home of Bob and Lolita Muhm August 2009

Appendix A
Thomas B. Bell Family Genealogy

- Thomas Boling Bell b. Danville, Boyle County, Kentucky (John Bell)
 d. 1842 (buried in family cemetery)(1842 Tax Record lists his estate)
 m. April 15, 1818 Clark County, Kentucky
- Nancy M. Collins b. February 17, 1796 Clark County, Kentucky
 d. July 24, 1884 Brazoria County, Texas
1. Zerrilda Bell b. January 27, 1819 Murfreesboro, Tennessee (name on tombstone)
 d. July 17, 1884 Brazoria County, Texas (buried in family cemetery)
 2. Laura D. Bell b. September 21, 1821 Clark County, Kentucky
 d. February 19, 1854 Brazoria County, Texas
 m. September 21, 1843
 Samuel Hinkle b. 1801 Kentucky
 d. 1868 Texas
 3. John Percy Bell b. 1823 Nacogdoches, Texas
 4. Willis C. Bell b. September 19, 1824 Harris County, Texas
 d. August 30, 1862 Lexington, Clark County, Kentucky (Lunatic Asylum)
 5. Alonso Bell b. 1827 Brazoria County, Texas
 6. Emily Angelica F. Bell b. August 9, 1830
 d. November 1, 1890
 7. Christopher Columbus Bell b. February 13, 1833, Brazoria County, Texas
 d. January 29, 1907, Brazoria County, Texas
 m. August 11, 1887
 Katherine Jackson b. January 25, 1859
 d. August 24, 1955
 A. Emily Angie Bell b. June 1888
 d. April 2, 1972
 m. 1916 Galveston, Texas
 Julian Judson Gibson
 a. Kathlyn Gibson (d. in her 20's in 1941 allergic reaction to sulfa drugs)
 8. Telemachus Bell b. 1835
 9. Thomas B. Bell b. 1838

Appendix B
Hinkle-McNeill Family Genealogy

Samuel Hinkle b. 1801 Kentucky
d. 1868 Texas

m. September 21, 1843 (No children)

Laura D. Bell b. September 21, 1821 Clark County, Kentucky
d. February 19, 1854 Brazoria County, Texas

Morgan Bryan Hinkle b. August 12, 1803 Rowan County, North Carolina
d. June 5, 1875 (buried old Cedar Lake Cemetery)
m. November 22, 1852

Cornelia Byrne b. September 29, 1827
d. December 17, 1904

I. Ella Hinkle b. January 19, 1855
d. December 10, 1930
m. October 22, 1874

Charles Philip McNeill b. June 21, 1847
d. March 8, 1926

A. Charles Philip McNeill Jr. b. June 7, 1876 d. April 8, 1943
m. September 23, 1903

Mary Randolph Reese b. July 9, 1882 d. June 3, 1972

1. Perry Reese McNeill b. August 27, 1904 d. April 20, 1976
m. February 22, 1931

Marguerite Picket b. September 20, 1906 d. February 23, 1978

a. Lolita Ruth McNeill b. April 29, 1932

m. February 13, 1954

Robert Eugene Muhm b. June 26, 1930

i. Philip McNeill Muhm b. May 4, 1955

b. Perry Reese McNeill Jr. b. August 28, 1933
m. December 10, 1955

Charlotte Stinnette b. November 20, 1932

i. William Nelson McNeill b. June 6, 1956

ii. Voy Marguerite McNeill b. December 15, 1958

1. Perry Reese McNeill

m. 2nd November 5, 1954

Elfreida Maris b. April 22, 1908

2. Helen Reese McNeill b. January 24, 1909 d. March 1, 1975
m. June 17, 1972

Elmer Johnson

B. Archie Bryan McNeill b. June 15, 1881 d. July 7, 1883

C. Andrew Byrne McNeill b. December 17, 1883-d. 1943
m. June 12, 1912

Minnie Perry Reese b. 1885-d. 1977

1. Andrew Byrne McNeill Jr. b. October 28, 1918 d. October 22, 1980
m. May 25, 1952
Evelyn Herman b. August 14, 1925 d.
a. Robert Andrew McNeill b. July 28, 1962
b. Nancy Lee McNeill b. October 31, 1965
- D. Cornelia Hinkle McNeill b. September 27, 1886 d. January 31, 1975
m. December 29, 1910
Harry Reginald Cooper b. January 6, 1876 d. January 1948
1. Miriam McNeill Cooper b. October 14, 1911
- E. Infant Son b. April 25, 1889 d. May 2, 1889
- F. Samuel Varian McNeill b. June 15, 1892 d. March 1, 1953
m. April 18, 1918
Hayden Agnes McKinnon b. October 30, 1893 d. April 30, 1968
- II. James Varian Hinkle b. August 18, 1856
d. February 23, 1945
m. December 8, 1879
Harriet (Hattie) Hite Cox b. October 31, 1859
d. April 29, 1931
- A. Alma Earle Hinkle b. October 16, 1880 d. April 25, 1971
m. December 30, 1908
William McCan Brooks b. June 28, 1868 d. August 13, 1932
2 Children
- B. James Thomas Hinkle
- C. Ella McNeill Hinkle
- D. Minnie Bell Hinkle
- E. Margaret Hinkle
- F. Joseph Varian Hinkle
- G. Mariah Hinkle



Back Row L to R: Minnie Bell, James Thomas, Ella: Front Row L To Right
Joseph Varian, Alma, Mariah, Mrs. J. V. Hinkle, Margaret in 1900

- III. Samuel Bryan Hinkle b. February 21, 1858
d. 1882 (Buried in old Cedar Lake Cemetery)

Appendix C

Deed Record

[illegible]

Hinkle's Ferry									
Samuel Hinkle	Morgan B. Hinkle	Deed	K	614/15	March	30	1866		\$6552.86 Several tracts of land in diff. counties and the 101 acres on SW end of tract on which he now resides + livestock
Samuel Hinkle	Morgan B. Hinkle	Deed	L	283/84	Aug	29	1868	200	\$500 His homestead 200 acres, his residence and out buildings, the Hinkle Ferry landing, Ferry Boat and Ferry privileges known as Hinkle's Ferry
Cornelia Hinkle	Ella McNeill	Deed	S	79/80	April	20	1878		\$700 her 1/2 interest as community property
James V. & Samuel B. Hinkle	Ella McNeill	Deed	S	80/81	April	25	1878		\$10 and property in Matagorda County their ½ interest in Hinkle Homestead & Ferry
Katie J. Bell	Robert P. Ballowe	Deed	7	23/25	Jan	1	1891	.5	½ acre became Tract 10
Robert P. Ballowe	James V. Hinkle	Deed	42	440/41	Oct	1	1897	.5	\$550
James V. Hinkle	James V. Hinkle, JR.	Deed	160	408	Jan	20	1920	.5	\$1000 Half acre tract with improvements thereon and 54 acres McCloskey League
Charles P. McNeill	Mary Reese McNeill Perry Reese McNeill Helen Reese Roger	Probate Record	16	45	April	29	1943	300	Homestead split among descendants by probate court ½ Mary Reese McNeill, ¼ Perry Reese McNeill, ¼ Helen Reese McNeill
	Otho W. Cobb, etux	Deed	514	645	Sept	4	1951	1.5	Tract 9A Store Location
	James V. Hinkle, Jr.	Deed	219	182	Nov	19	1929	.5	Tract 9B Across road
	Helen McNeill Johnson	Deed	1156	727	April	18	1973	2.437	Home Tract 9C
	Lolita Ruth McNeill Muhm	Deed	1237 1246	113 707	Feb May	24 19	1975 1975	2.437	Home Tract 9C
Mary Reese McNeill Estate	Perry Reese McNeill Jr. William Nelson McNeill Vey Marguerite McNeill Lolita Ruth McNeill Muhm Philip McNeill Muhm	Deed	1319	685	Dec	30	1974	150	Each an equal interest Tract 9
	Lolita Ruth McNeill Muhm	Deed	1744	416	Nov	1	1980	129	Tract 9D
	Lolita Ruth McNeill Muhm	Deed	1540	1	May	2	1980	100	Tract 9D
	Philip McNeill Muhm	Deed	1540	1	May	2	1980	29	Tract 9D

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

UNPUBLISHED PAPERS

Brazoria County Historical Museum Library, Angleton, Texas

Thomas B. Bell File in Stephen F. Austin Original 300 Families

Hinkle Family File #156

McNeill Family File #

Hinkle's Ferry File

Texas State Archives

Republic of Texas Claims

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

The Brazosport Facts

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

Deed Records Brazoria County, County Clerk's Office, Angleton, Texas

Probate Records Brazoria County, County Clerk's Office, Angleton, Texas

Civil and Criminal Court Records, District Clerk's Office, Brazoria County Courthouse, Angleton, Texas

Brazoria County Tax Records on microfilm Brazoria County Historical Museum, Angleton, Texas

Federal Population Schedule, Seventh Census of the United States.

1850 The State of Texas, Brazoria County

"Schedule 2—Slave Inhabitants in the County of Brazoria, Texas"

Federal Population Schedule, Eighth Census of the United States.

1860 The State of Texas, Brazoria County

"Schedule 2—Slave Inhabitants in the County of Brazoria, Texas"

Federal Population Schedule, Ninth Census of the United States.

1870

Federal Population Schedule, Tenth Census of the United States.

1880

Secondary Sources

BOOKS, ESSAYS, THESES, AND DISSERTATIONS

Gulick, Charles A. Jr., et al (eds.) , The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 6 Vols., A. C. Baldwin & Sons, Austin, 1921

Hudgins, Edgar H., Hudgins Virginia to Texas, Larksdale Press, Houston, Texas, 1983

Raska, Ginny McNeill and Mary Lynne Gasaway Hill, The Uncompromising Diary of Sallie McNeill 1858-1867, Texas A & M University Press, College Station, Texas, 2009

Smithwick, Noah, The Evolution of a State, Steck-Vaughn Company, Austin, Texas, 1968

Strobel, Abner J., The Old Plantations and Their Owners of Brazoria County Texas, Revised Edition, The Union National Bank, Houston, Texas

Handbook of Texas Online