

William and Mary Williams Vinzant Family

The William "Bill" Vinzant family lived near the Lemon Community in Smith County, Mississippi. William's early land patents in 1841 were for land two miles southwest of Lemon. Another patent filed at the same time was for eighty acres just off the main street in Raleigh. This patent was filed jointly with his father and William Tullos. Before 1860 he patented a forty plus another one hundred twenty acre plot just south of Burns Methodist Church. He also patented one hundred twenty acres near Clear Springs Tower on the Smith - Jasper County line. As the Civil War neared, William was a prosperous and prominent Smith County landowner, farmer, and office holder.

William was born December 27, 1811 in what is now Alabama. It was Washington County, Mississippi Territory in 1811. His parents, John and Sarah Vinzant, apparently were married there before 1810. They eventually settled in Shongelo in Smith County when opened to white settlement by the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. John, his wife and children, patented more than three hundred acres in the immediate vicinity of Shongelo when the first patents were available in 1841.

According to a recent Smith County newspaper article, William was elected one of five police officers in the first Smith County election held March 11, 1834. The election report read, "We, Samuel Hawthorn and James L. Jolly, two of the Commissioners appointed to organize the County of Smith, do hereby certify that we have held an Election in said County for five police officers and on counting out said votes do find that the following men were duly elected: E. A. Durr, Daniel Currie, Richard Flowers, Thomas Husbands, and William Vinzant. Given under our hands, this 11th day of March, 1834. Samuel Hawthorn and James L. Jolly." In 1840 he was elected sheriff – he would have been twenty-nine years old. Before and during the Civil War he served as Smith County Treasurer.

A family story relates that Bill Vinzant was a livestock trader who traveled extensively and regularly between East Texas, New Orleans and Smith County. On one of his trips (age thirty-four and never married) he stopped for the night at a Washington Parish, Louisiana home and as was the custom of the time was invited to stay for supper, share news, and sleep for the night. Receiving instructions to stable his horse he found a "pretty girl" milking a cow. Being a gentleman he waited and accompanied her back to the house. His one night turned into three. Upon arriving at his home, he put his herd to pasture and immediately saddled a fresh horse for himself; another two with side saddles and returned to St. Tammany. The next time his brothers saw him was when he arrived at home with his young bride and her servant girl. Mary's parents have not yet been identified; we know she was born in Mississippi in 1828 and that William and Miss Mary Williams were married on August 17, 1845, in the Parish of St. Tammany by Lyman Briggs, the Parish Judge.

To that marriage were born eleven children. Nancy A. was born December 14, 1846, and married James J. "Jim" Burns. Sarah was born in 1849 and died young. Edward Baxter "Bud" was born about 1850 and married Mary Acenia Bowling. (See history of Edward Baxter and Mary Acenia Vinzant.) Goldwire "Bay" was born March 16, 1855, and married Miranda Ann Boykin about 1872. Bay died in 1878 of Yellow Fever contracted in the delta region. Mary Ann was born May 12, 1857, and died one day after Bay. Family history says she contracted Yellow Fever while caring for her brother. They are buried together in High Hill Cemetery. Louisa "Ludie" was born June 1, 1859, and married Burwell Boling. Albert S. J. was born April 20, 1862. He married Mary Grace Broadfoot. (See history of Albert S.J. and Mary G. Vinzant.) Eugenia E. "Lizzie" was born November 5, 1864; she married Drayton A. Boozer (see history of Drayton A. and Eugenia Vinzant Boozer). Aurelia Melinda was born January 16, 1867, and married Tyree Robinson. Emma "M" was born May 7, 1869, and married Artis Wheeler Stennett (see history of Artis Wheeler Stennett). Sousan "Sue" was born May 10, 1873; she married Wallace B. Moore (see history of Wallace B. and Sousan Vinzant Moore).

H. Grady Howell, Jr.'s book For Dixie Land I'll Take My Stand lists William as Captain of both the Smith County Guards (local defense) and of Company K, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, Mississippi State Troops, CSA. William's name appears on a single record card in the state archives. He is on the muster roll as Captain, Company K, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, Mississippi State Troops for the period of August 29 to September 14, 1864. His enlistment period was for thirty days; the remaining fourteen days are Absent with Leave. He was enrolled by himself and reported with his Smith County unit to Brandon. Almost identical information is provided about each member of Company K. The 3rd Mississippi State Cavalry had been mustered into Confederate Service in April 1864 and was later reinforced with Home Guard units. Apparently Company K returned to Smith County to continue Home Guard duty after mustering in and brief training. Integration with the rest of the regiment was apparently not attempted. The 3rd Regiment was, by that time, a tested and hardened unit. The record indicates they were in Georgia, not Brandon. Company K was made up of the youngest, the oldest, and the malingers, indeed rounding up deserters was a prime duty of the Home Guard. It is not obvious there were arms for Company K, other than the weapons owned by individuals. Future Mississippi Governor, Anse McLaurin was a sixteen-year-old Private in this unit.

We know little of the family in the period after the war. Like most of those from the south, William's net worth declined drastically in the post war period. William passed away on November 6, 1887, and Mary passed away on January 7, 1906. They are buried in Goodwater Baptist Church Cemetery in Lemon, Smith County, Mississippi. Submitted by Bill G. Vinzant, Skaneateles, New York, and George Stuart, Raleigh, Mississippi.