

William Thompson (1836-1890)

William Thompson was born 24 September 1836 in Perry County, Missouri, in the southeastern part of the state along the Mississippi River. He was the second of seven children of John Thompson and Mary Anne Knott, who were married there four years earlier.

The Knott family was Catholic, having come to Missouri from Maryland by way of Kentucky in the early 1800s. John Thompson, a resident of Barren County, Kentucky, joined the Catholic Church in Perry County, Missouri upon his marriage to Mary Anne. Their seven children were all baptized in the local parish.

John and Mary Anne Thompson sold their land in Perry County in 1848 and moved their family to Davis County, Iowa, adjoining the northern Missouri border. In March 1850, Mary Anne died of "sudden death, cause unknown" in her middle 30s, leaving John Thompson with six young children - three sons and three daughters. (One of their sons had died in infancy several years earlier.)

Later that same year, John Thompson married a widow with seven children of her own. John Thompson and Sarah Jane (Miller) McCullum were married on 12 September 1850 in Scotland County, Missouri, just across the border from Davis County, Iowa. This family was listed in the census of Grove Township in Davis County on 8 October 1850: John, a farmer, his wife Sarah Jane, and their thirteen children aged from 15 years down to one year.

In this census, 13-year-old William Thompson's middle initial was given as "J". This is the only known record where his middle initial was "J". In most of the later records, he did not use a middle name. However, in a marriage record he was shown as "William M. Thompson" and his tombstone was inscribed "W. M. Thompson". Either the 1850 census entry was in error or he changed his middle name later in life to something starting with "M".

John and Jane Thompson sold their land in Davis County, Iowa on 2 June 1851 (the transaction taking place in Scotland County, Missouri) and moved to Missouri. They had two daughters of their own by 1855. The family was listed in the 1860 census of Salt River Township (P. O. Greentop), Schuyler County, Missouri, along the northern Missouri border west of Scotland County. This census entry, dated 20 July 1860, showed John, his wife (name given as "Polly" - a nickname or an error by the census enumerator), his two youngest daughters by his first marriage - Sarah and Mary, Jane's son Adam, and their two daughters Elizabeth and Jane. The other children from John's and Sarah Jane's first marriages had left the household. By that time, John's oldest son James Clement Thompson was married and living in Randolph County, Illinois. Two of Sarah Jane's daughters were living elsewhere in Schuyler County. The other children have not yet been located in the 1860 census.

William Thompson must have been living somewhere in nearby in northern Missouri at

the time. Shortly after the beginning of the Civil War, he enlisted as a Private in the Union Army (Company D, 18th Regiment, Missouri Infantry) at Unionville, Putnam County, Missouri on 27 July 1861. His regiment was involved in the Battle of Shiloh near Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, where he was captured by the Confederate Army on 6 April 1862. He was paroled late in the same year and rejoined his company by early 1863. On 1 February 1864, he volunteered again to serve until the end of the war in the same company. At the time of his re-enlistment, he was described as "aged Twenty-seven years, and by occupation a Farmer ... has Blue eyes, Dark hair, fair complexion, is five feet 7-1/2 inches high". (William's older brother James, in that same year, enlisted in Company E, 8th Regiment of the Illinois Infantry, Union Army. His physical description was "Blue eyes, Dark hair, Light complexion, and height 5 feet 9 inches".) William was mustered out near Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky on 18 July 1865 as a Private.

On 13 July 1870, William Thompson was living with his father John, step-mother Sarah Jane, and younger sister Sarah Anne in Glenwood Township, Schuyler County, Missouri. He was working on his father's farm. There was a two-year-old boy named Willie M. Thompson living in the same household. Perhaps this was William's nephew (but whose son?). No more is known about William's parents after 1870.

William, a resident of Schuyler County, was married there on 4 June 1874 to Nancy Elizabeth Bradshaw, a daughter of John Henry Bradshaw and Rutha Jane Baugh. At the time of their marriage, William was 37 years old and Nancy was about 19 years old. (The Declaration for Widow's Pension, written on 24 September 1890 in Franklin County, Arkansas by his later wife Amanda, indicated that his marriage to Nancy was his second marriage. An earlier marriage for William has not yet been found.)

On Christmas Day, 1876, William and Nancy Thompson's first child William Vincent (or Venson) was born. (According to some accounts, William Vincent was born near Grove, in the northern part of the Indian Territory, in what is now Delaware County, Oklahoma. The 1880 and 1900 censuses, however, listed his birthplace as Missouri, and the 1910 and 1920 censuses listed his birthplace as Kansas.) On 25 February 1878, their daughter Sarah Ann was born in Coffeyville, Montgomery County, Kansas, along Kansas's southern border with the Indian Territory. Another daughter, Ida May, was born on 1 May 1879 in either Montgomery County or nearby Chautauqua County, Kansas. On 11 Jun 1880, this family was listed in the census of Hendricks Township, Chautauqua County: William, a farmer, his young wife Nancy, and their three small children.

During the next couple of years, they may have moved southward into the Indian Territory, possibly around Grove. Nancy died there in the early 1880s. Nancy's parents had also moved to this part of the Indian Territory and Nancy's mother Rutha Jane (Baugh) Bradshaw died there about the same time.

Left with three (or four) small children, William sent them to Missouri to live with relatives. (It is not clear which relatives. Nancy had some family living in Henry County in southwest Missouri at the time, which was not very far away.) William, however, was not satisfied with the way his children were being cared for, and took them back to live

with him. They traveled by covered wagon over the Boston Mountains of northwest Arkansas and settled near Mulberry, Crawford County, Arkansas on riverbed land.

On 27 December 1885, William Thompson remarried in Mulberry to Amanda Ann (Claunch) Sossamon (daughter of Harvey C. Claunch and Eleanor D. Mullen), a widow in her early 40s. Amanda was twice previously married. Her first husband was William Allison Sossamon, about 30 years her senior, whom she married on 28 January 1862 in Pope County, Arkansas. After his death, she remarried on 5 March 1876 in Yell County, Arkansas to Daniel C. Sossamon. (Daniel may have been a nephew of William Allison.) She had five children, including a son, Marion H. Sossamon. According to one of William's military pension applications, another child, John E. Sossamon, was born on 26 December 1882. Since Amanda was widowed by the time of the 1880 census, it is not clear whose child this is. No more is known about this child. Maybe it was an infant of William Thompson by his first marriage. (Only two of Amanda's five children were living by 1910 - Marion and one other.)

William and Amanda moved to Franklin County, just east of Mulberry. William, suffering from rheumatism and liver disease, died in Franklin County, Arkansas on 29 August 1890 at 53 years of age and was buried as "W. M. Thompson" in the Hixson Cemetery. Amanda raised her stepchildren William Vincent, Sarah Ann, and Ida May. After the children married, Amanda remained in Franklin County. At the time of the census in April 1910, she was living in Wallace Township along Mulberry Road with her son Marion H. Sossamon. She died there on 13 February 1913 and was buried in Hixson Cemetery alongside William M. Thompson.

Written by: Mark B. Arslan (a great-grandson of William Thompson's daughter Sarah Ann).

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