

O'Neal

Family History

O'Neal, Owen, Hamrick, Broome, Sims, Porter, Herring, Allen, Middleton, Palmer, Draper
Sharpley, Tinkle, Steen, Campbell, Poarch, Farmer, Sprecher, Thompson, Pritchard, Knighton, Smith

Research Collection of Peggy O'Neal Farmer

Family Charts by Bill O'Neal, Texas State Historian
Timeline, Scanning and Re-Printing by Mike O'Neal

ANY and ALL Contributions are most welcome!

Photos, Articles, Letters, Stories, Names, Dates

O'Neal Family History

*ALL of this material is VERY interesting and informative,
and worthy of your time to review..*

But, PLEASE – check these out at least:

- *Aunt Ellen's Interview "Papa Was An Irishman"*
- *Letter From Cousin Draper To His Brother Griffin*
(describing the Owen Wagon-Train from Mississippi to Texas)
 - *excerpt of J.M. Hamrick Will*
(where he dis-inherits Pop and Gilley – CRAZY story)
 - *Bill's Family Tree Charts*
- *Family Timeline – England 1600 to Texas Today*
- *Bettye's "Dear Ones" - Story of the Sharpley's*

Please send corrections, additions, etc to:

MIKE@MikeONealMusic.net

O'Neal Family History



John Thomas O'Neal

1868 - 1955

Carrollton County, Georgia



Nannie Ophelia Owen

1874 - 1961

Hinds County, Mississippi

Married December 14, 1893

Emhouse, Texas



To any Regularly Licensed or Ordained Minister of the Gospel, Jewish Rabbi, Judge District or County Court, or any Justice Peace, in and for Navarro County, Greeting:

You are hereby Authorized to Solemnize the

rites of MATRIMONY

Between Mr. J. J. Omeal and
Miss Nannie Owen

and make due return to the Clerk of the County Court of said County, within sixty days thereafter, certifying your action under this License.

Witness my official signature and seal of office.



Office in Corsicana the 13 day of Dec 1893
J. Wilson Clerk of County Court Navarro County
By _____ Deputy

I B. N. Price hereby certify that on the 14 day of Dec. 1893.
I united in Marriage J. J. Omeal

and Miss Nannie Owen: the parties abovenamed.

Witness my hand this 14 day of December 1893.

B. N. Price
Minister of Gospel

Returned and filed for record the 19 day of Dec 1893
and recorded the 30 day of Dec 1894

Mattie Summ Deputy J. J. Wilson County Clerk

“Pop”

Family History has to have *someone* as the starting point of reference. People came before, and people come after, but you have to start with *someone* and work your way back in time and forward to the future. My grandfather John Thomas O'Neal died at 86 before I was even 3 years old, so I don't have personal memory of him, but my whole life I have heard stories about Pop. So, HE is *my* starting point of interest in O'Neal Family History.

Most stories describe Pop as his own man, a builder, the man-in-charge of anything he set out to do, very opinionated, sure he was right, confident that his way was the right way, but very fair and helpful to people, and a tough, gruff, grouchy old man. You didn't want to bother him when he was listening to baseball on his radio! Ben says "Pop was a mean old bastard", but with love and respect, as he was his grandson and pallbearer. Pop raised and provided for his large family of eight, during very difficult economic times, and endured the untimely deaths of two of his children.

He was not yet 5 when his own mother died at an early age. His father remarried, he strongly disliked his step-mother, and around age 11, he left his family home in Georgia and headed West (either on-his-own OR with his uncle - we don't know which). He made it to Minden, Louisiana near Shreveport, where he lived with and worked for his uncle, and learned carpentry. Later at age 18, he pulled up and headed West again, looking for a life, ending up in Navarro County, Texas. There's a lot more, but I'll let you find out for yourself in the following pages of this O'Neal Family History notebook!

THIS Collection

Interest in Family History just hits you one day, if you're lucky. For me, it began with my brother Bill's handwritten Family Tree Chart, then stories from my elders (I'm the youngest first cousin), old pictures, letters and articles. Sharing Cousin Peggy O'Neal Farmer's amazing research notebooks sealed the deal! This notebook I share with you I HOPE will be a growing, living, breathing resource that our family can read, enjoy and add to!

ALL RIGHT!

Mike O'

Papa was an IRISHMAN

By LAURI GRAY BUSIEK
Sun Features Editor

Sure 'n Begorrah! Celebrating St. Patrick's Day, an Irish tradition, during the Texas Sesquicentennial could be an admirable feat in a state where the locals make more noise than the imports. It's only a guess, but perhaps the Irish — like the Czechs, the Germans and other nationalities who have come to the Lone Star State for all its opportunities — have been rapidly Texanized.

We've no brawling pubs named Murphy's or O'Shea's, so the Irish blend into the scenery at such places as the Mustang Club and the Derrick Club Lounge. No corned beef and cabbage-cooking back-street restaurants, so the Texanized Irishman downs fajitas and margaritas with the best. There are no derbies characters on the corner of Beaton and Fifth spouting tales of the "little people," so perhaps the man sitting on the stool next to yours at Hashop's or Roy's is full-blood Irish. You may never know.

There are no stereotypical markers, but we're more Irish than you may think. The 1990 Census revealed 1,413 people in Corsicana claimed to be "purebred Irish" and 3,129 claimed mixed Irish parentage: In Navarro County, 2,388 claimed single Irish ancestry and 5,455, mixed.

Ellen O'Neal Sharpley is one of the above, but she's not sure which. She is 91. In her room at Twilight Home, she talked about her Irishness with a clear recollection that well serves the storytelling reputation of her fellow Irish ancestors.

"Papa was full-blood Irish," she said, and began regaling the story of her father, John Thomas O'Neal, the son of Leroy O'Neal, a native Irishman who came to the U.S. in the mid 1800s. Discontent at home and early an adventurer, John Thomas ran away from his father's home in Carrolton, Ga., at age 11. "He caught lumber wagons and rides all the way to Minden, Louisiana," she said. From 11 to 18, he lived there with an uncle. At 18, evidently suffering from another

case of wanderlust, O'Neal bought a horse, a saddle and a blanket and headed west, looking for work. "He didn't know a thing but farming," said Mrs. Sharpley. The young man's wanderings took him to the vicinity of Cryer Creek — about 8 miles northwest of Corsicana — where he worked for a Miss Mattie Stokes for a period then traveled to Emhouse. Arriving in town he gained lodging for the night in the home of G.W. Owen, a local businessman and father of his future bride.

"Papa and Mama, after they were married, moved to Cryer Creek and built a little house by the side of the road. I was born there," Mrs. Sharpley said.

The O'Neals lived in their little house that year then returned to Emhouse and lived with G.W. Owen for 2-3 years.

"He always had a yearning to go somewhere. I can remember Papa getting this covered wagon ready," said Mrs. Sharpley. "He loaded us in the covered wagon and it was well fixed because he was a carpenter. We went to Duncan, Oklahoma. It took us from Monday morning to the next Friday or Saturday.

Once in Oklahoma, O'Neal resumed farming, with some success. Unfortunately, and quite characteristically Irish, said Mrs. Sharpley, "He was afraid of snakes.

"In Oklahoma we had rattlesnakes, copperheads and those old, black coachwhip snakes. You'd be driving your old Cultivator and the snakes would jus' scuttle." The Irishman opted to return home to Texas — where he stayed.

Mrs. Sharpley recalled what it was like to grow up the daughter of a Texan Irishman:

• "Papa was very Irish. He was a big talker if you could ever get him interested. Free-hearted. Big hearted. Big man when he was young — 200 pounds.

• "Papa never went to school much. He learned to read, though, and was a great reader. We took the Dallas Morning News ever since I can remember."

• "We always wore a green leaf on St. Patrick's Day as we went to school that morning. Mother did that. Mother was Irish. I've heard little things that

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ELLEN O'NEAL SHARPLEY

☆ "Papa", J.T. O'Neal, was actually NOT full-blood Irish. His father Lee Roy O'Neal was born in Georgia, and grandfather William O'Neal was born in South Carolina, but certainly the O'Neals do trace back to Ireland. On JT's mother's side, Hamrick(Hamerick) ancestors came from Germany.

"Mama", Nannie Owen, could also have been PART Irish on her Owen side. Her Porter ancestors trace back to England 1600's. Her mother's Herring ancestors trace back to Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina 1700's, and possibly Pennsylvania.

'Papa was full-blood Irish'

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made me think they were Dutch Irish.

● "When I was 14 I was 5'10"... and I was a redhead, now, that was Irish. My oldest brother had red hair too.

They called him Red. They started out to call me Red, but I'd fight every boy in the school if they called me Red.

● "Mother was an Irish cook. She took potatoes and scraped and put them on and boiled them with fresh pork, seasoned with salt and pepper and then made a cream sauce. You can't get any more Irish than that!

● "Papa always planted potatoes like the Irish did. The land would be broken in the fall. In spring, around the last of February, he'd go in with a cultivator and bust up the rows and

plant potatoes. He'd cut the eyes off the potatoes. We never used nothing but red potatoes. Drop them eyes in that middle bed. Throw fresh dirt over them. They'd bloom, just a few at the top of the plant.

● "He and Mama would have an argument and if he thought he was right, he was right. Mama, she'd tell him, 'You Irishman! You just always think you're right!' He'd say, 'That's the reason I'm Irish.'

● "She always called him 'Mr. O'Neal.' He always called her 'Madam.'

● "Papa used lots of swear words — he'd say 'damn' and 'hell' a lot. I always thought that was an Irish trait.

● "About all I ever though was an Irish trait was to get in the bottle of liquor and get drunk. One night Papa came in and put a jug of liquor in the bottom of the two sections of stove. Mama cried. Papa looked at her and said, 'Don't cry, Madam. When I finish this jug, I'll quit.' As far as I know he never did drink anymore.'

● "I think Grandpa O'Neal was 81 when he died. He was a cabinet maker. Papa went to see his father before he died. Grandfather took him up to the workshop and showed him the coffin he had built for himself. He had done the outside with beeswax and the palm of his hand. Papa said it was beautiful. 'Course, that's just two men's opinion.'

Alameda, California, May 30, 1958

Mrs. Namie O'Neal
Corsicana, Texas

Dear Cousin:

A few months ago my brother Draper took it upon himself to jot down some of the incidents and happenings which occurred during our journey from Miss. to Tex back in the year 1881. As you are probably about his same age it is likely that you can remember some of the items. Therefore, I thought you might like to have a copy which I am sending you herewith.

I oftenthink of you all and how you might be getting along. Your daughter, Ellen, keeps me pretty well posted when she sends her Christmas card. I trust you keep in good health and are happy there in your daughter's home. Everything is just about the same here in our household. My wife Anita's condition remains unchanged from what it was when she was stricken over three years ago. I have mangged to take care of her with the assistance of a visiting nurse who comes once a week. Anita is a good patient and not at all exacting. She is entirely helpless except for use of her right hand in taking food at the table. I get her up three times a day by means of a mechanical lift to get her up into the wheel chair. I am kept prettybusy most of the time and seldom get a chance to leave home except for shopping once a week. Please remember me kindly to the rest of the connection.

Love from your cousin,
Griffin (Johnson)

Dallas, Texas December 13, 1957

Dear brother Griffin:

As I was thinking last night of our exodus from Miss. to Texas in November 1881, 76 years ago, thought of jotting down a few items which might be of interest. Will attempt to relate only such of the happenings as are now most vivid in my mind. To begin with, Father had gathered his crop of cotton, taken it to the market at Vicksburg, 32 miles away, sold it at a nominal price, come back all enthused over going to Texas which region none of us knew about except for hear-say. We all got busy right away. Sold most of our belongings, which were not given away, and loaded what was left on a Conestoga wagon, such as the 49ers used to reach the Golden Shore in California. Uncle Jeff Porter joined us at this time with his yoke of oxen which were used in the lead. Our two oxen were named Lep and Bright. I believe Uncle Jeff must have walked the greater part of the way, as it was his job to drive the two yoke of oxen by use of a long ox whip, without the aid of a line or rope of any kind. He did not have to hit the oxen at all, but drove them by talking to them, with an occasional crack of the whip over their heads. Faithful animals they were indeed! Uncle Jeff was relieved once in a while by Father. Our wagon, being a two-yoker, led the caravan throughout the entire journey. Our family consisted of five: our two parents, Uncle Jeff, you and me. George Owen's wagon was next in line, and his family totaled eight: he and his wife, Susan, and six children, Dick, Bettie, Anna, Nannie, Julia, and Ross. The Croquette family, the third and last in line, consisted of the following: the two parents and four children: Will, Lila, Mary, and Irma, the baby. This made up a total of 19 souls venturing out into, what was to us at least, an unknown country. We older kids walked most of the time as the ox teams were too slow for us.

There was not much traffic on these terrible roads, especially through La. We left our homes in Miss. sometime in November 1881. Was over five weeks on the way. Of course, we stopped over to rest a day or two now and then, about ten days in all. By mid-afternoon of the first day out, the rain came down in torrents. We had to go by the home of your name-sake, Thomas Griffin, to bid him and his family good-bye. Such a commotion --two "buddies" and bosom friends separating never to see each other again. They wanted us to stay over night, but we decided against it and proceeded to plod along through the pouring rain. We slept that night in the covered wagon with the rain pouring down all night. We kept quite dry as the wagon sheet was water-proof. We passed through Ft. Gibson the second day. On the third day, Saturday, we arrived at Rodney, Miss. on the levee of the "Father of the Waters." We arrived too late to ferry across, as the steam ferry boat had tied up for the night. Rodney was a Negro town. We camped on the levee by the side of the road. The men took turn about that night as caravan watchmen. We boarded the big side wheel ferry on Sunday morning. The big water took my eye. The river was over a mile wide at that point. The first town we came to in La. was Water Proof. The business section was of wood construction and built on stilts high enough for a buggy with top/^{up}to park under the stores. Here I had my first introduction to baker's bread. They also bought some cluster raisins. I thought it was sure high living. While going along the levee on the La. side, a steamboat proceeding down the stream hove in sight. It turned out to be the "Robert E. Lee." We kids yelled and waved until the boat veered to the other side of the river and was lost to view. The old folks jokingly told us we had scared the boat away. We jogged along into Catahonla Parish where we observed that pecans

were very plentiful along the roadside, actually formed in heaps beneath the trees. This was the cause of my getting a broken arm, jumping out of the moving wagon in an effort to join the other kids in picking up the pecans. Uncle Jeff yelled at me not to jump, but he was a bit too late. He was the first to reach me. In the midst of the commotion a lone Negro man on a mule came along on the seldom-traveled road. We asked him to direct us to the nearest doctor. He told us of one located at Harrisonburg about 4 miles ahead on the Ochita River. The mule rider very kindly volunteered to go back and signal the ferryman for us, the town being on the opposite side of the river from us. The ferryman told us where to find the best doctor. The doctor lost no time in setting my arm, binding it with pine splints and bandages. After that my activities were somewhat curtailed, but only for a few days. Next we passed through Indian country --Catahonla Indians, the first I had ever seen. I could hardly believe they were Indians, as they did not wear feathered head-gear as I had seen in pictures. Father bought dried venison steaks on sticks. Had to soak them in cold water before cooking. The woods were full of deer and there were fish galore. So you see we fared pretty well. The weather being rainy, on one occasion we obtained shelter in an old Southern home owned by people by the name of Kendrix - two spinster sisters and one bachelor brother were the occupants. It certainly was a relief to get in out of the rain. Had a nice large room, good bed, and kitchen privileges. We remained there several days. Do not know where the other part of the caravan stopped. We ran into another rainy spell further on in Cagney Land. Father stopped at a house to see about renting a vacant house across the road. The woman charged him a dollar in silver. She dropped in on the floor several times to see if it had the right ring to it. They were a very suspicious class of people. Their

was a mixture of Spanish and French. We then came to Martenville, La. served by the T. P. R. R. It was very interesting to see the engines making up a train. We next passed through Mansfield, La. I remember there were quite a number of churches in this town, all with tall steeples. We passed on to Logansport, the last place in La. Ferried across the river to Texas soil and entered the "Promised Land." The first place at which we camped in Texas was a picturesque, piney woods, village, with a big creek flowing by it. California was the name of the village in Shelby County. We noticed people on their front porches, operating hand looms and spinning wheels. The next town was Henderson, Texas, where we saw an old fashioned water mill in operation. We stopped and watched it quite a while. It was still forty miles to our destination, Tyler, Texas. It was two days travel, as we seldom went over 20 miles a day. We arrived in Tyler in due time, where the Owen family separated from us and went on their way to Navarro County, where Susan Owen's brother, Bob Herrin resided. Our part of the trip was at an end. Little did we know what was in store for us. To think what changes have taken place in 76 years! Our journey which required five weeks in ox wagons is now made in less than two hours by airplanes. Of the thirteen people in the first two wagons, only four are living today: Mrs. Nannie O'Neal, and her brother, Ross Owen, both of Corsicana, you and me. We lost sight of the Croquette family, so cannot say if any of them still exist.

Your brother,

Draper (Johnson)

(Note: Draper and Griffin Johnson's mother was named Porter; it was her brother Jeff Porter who led the ox team on this journey. Jeff Porter and his sister were ~~first~~ first cousins to George Owen, whose wagon was second in line.) (George Owen's mother was Elizabeth Porter Owen, wife of Gadi Owen)

J. R. HAMRICK
P. O. BOX 154
CARROLLTON, GEORGIA

Excerpt from the Will Of James M. Hamrick Sr.

Book A. Page 306, Will. Date, 19th. day of November, 1890.
Office of Ordinary
Carroll County Court House
Carrollton, Georgia

Item #6

I disinherit the two Children of Menerva E. Smith; afterwards the wife of Leroy O'Neal, which she bore by Leroy O'Neal; known by the names as Tommie and Gilley O'Neal, for the following reasons; inhuman and brutal treatment of their mother, my daughter; but her three children by Elbert Smith are to be admitted to have an equal share with the other grand children; that is, those three children to have their mother's share of my estate.

This probably explains why you have never known more about Emeline Hamrick.

I went to see several people to gather the material that I am sending. A Mr. U. W. Jordan, who is in his 97th year told me that the O'Neal children did not show any concern about their parents and that the Smith children were their only comforters in their old age.

Mrs. Couch of Villa Rica, a daughter of James Martin Hamrick remembers Gilley making them a visit when she was a small child but could tell me nothing more.

Above is simply plain FACT. Here's the STORY as I understand it from talking with Peggy and Bill, and my own conclusion. Pop would not talk about this. Pop's Mother Minerva Emaline Hamrick (called Ellen?) first married Elbert Smith and had three children; Smith was killed in the Civil War; she married Lee Roy O'Neal in 1867. Lee Roy, with good purpose or not, had Emaline institutionalized. She died in 1874 at age 39; Pop was 5 years old. Lee Roy remarried in 1877. Emaline's father J.M. Hamrick, likely disliked Lee Roy for all this and disinherited Pop and his sister as recourse. Pop disliked his stepmother and left home at age 11. Sounds like James Hamrick was a bitter old man and didn't accomplish much with this legal action.