

The Bobbitts by Warren Kump
Oberlin Kansas Bobbitts Lineage

Bobbitt	Hoyt	Comstock	Morgan
Francis Marion Bobbitt		Julia Lucy Comstock	
Ray	Ila	Earl	Hazel
			Margaret



According to John W. Bobbitt's 1985 book *The Bobbitt Family in America* the Bobbitt coat of arms was first introduced about 1250 AD. The central shield displays three diagonal silver stripes on a field of red. The surname "Bobbette" is a diminutive form meaning "son of Robert" as does the surname "Robertson". The first known to bear the name in North America was Edward "Bobet" who resided in Taunton, Massachusetts, as early as 1643. William Bobbitt arrived in Virginia from Wales about thirty years later. Descendants of the Massachusetts branch of the family spell the name as "Babbitt" while those descended from the Virginia branch retain the "Bobbitt" spelling. Edward and William were related in some way.

The Bobbitt Lineage of Francis Marion Bobbitt

William Bobbitt of Wales	1649-1703	Joanna "Anna7' Sturdivant ?
John Bobbitt of Chowan	1678-1736	Sarah Green
William Bobbitt Sr.	1704-1768	Amy Bennett
John Richard Bobbitt	1725-1791	Amy Alston
Isham Bobbitt	1754-1836	Elizabeth James
Isham Drury Bobbitt	1790-1849	Cynthia Ann Haggard
John William Bobbitt	1832-1909	Julia Hoyt
Francis Marion Bobbitt	1868-1906	Julia Lucy Comstock



William Bobbitt of Wales (1649-1703)

The Bobbitt clan originated in the southernmost extent of Wales, in the Glamorganshire region below the hills and separated from England by the Bristol Channel. Wales had joined England in a common system of laws and government in 1536, and the people had slowly accepted the idea of the union.

When the English Civil War broke out in 1642 the Welsh people tended to favor the Royalist Party and the Established Church over the Puritans and their fanatical leader, Oliver Cromwell. It was probably economics and a changing system of land tenure however, which prompted the emigration of Edward "Bobet" in 1640's and William Bobbitt in the 1670's.

All the British colonies along the eastern seaboard of North America were considered by the Welsh people to be exotic and remote, although fabulously fertile, teeming with wild game and rich with opportunity. It was a matter of political and religious preference, therefore, which determined the choice between New England controlled by the Puritans or Virginia where the king's appointed governor, Sir William Berkeley, was a staunch Royalist. (upon hearing that Cromwell had ordered the king beheaded, Governor Berkeley declared the nineteen-year-old Prince of Wales to be King of Virginia, if not of England.) Virginia never did recognize the dictatorship of Cromwell.² The Bobbitts were adherents of the "Established Church" and, if they were political at all, probably favored the monarchy. They chose royalist Virginia. By the time they left for America the Prince of Wales had already ascended the British throne as Charles II.

William Bobbitt was twenty-four years of age when he arrived in Virginia with his wife Anna in 1673. They had married in Wales and had managed to pay for their transportation to America out of their own funds. At Jamestown they found the colonial capital to be a mere village,

although its original wattle-and-daub huts had been replaced by substantial brick buildings. The State house, built the year before, was part of a handsome row of houses which faced the river and provided appropriate rooms for the Council, the House of Burgesses and other colonial officials. The population of the entire Virginia colony was little more than 40,000.



FIGURE 182: Virginia, in this seventeenth century view, was an earthly paradise, fertile beyond belief and teeming with wild game. Finding fish and game for your table was not hard work, but simply good sport.

As two individuals, having paid their own transport as attested formally by the captain of their arriving ship, each was eligible for a grant of 50 acres, a total of 100 acres of good land from the largess of the king. The choice parcels along the James River had already been claimed, but fine plots farther upstream were still available. They found their 96-acre farm on the south bank of the Appomattox River, a tributary of the James, just above the confluence of the two. The royal grant read:

TO ALL, to whom these presents shall come, Greeting in Our Lord God Everlasting; WHEREAS, it doth please Our Sovereign Lord, KING CHARLES II, Now know ye that, I Lord Governor, WILLIAM BERKELEY, appointed by the King Governor of this Commonwealth etc ; Give, and Grant, unto the said WILLIAM BOBBIYT, a dividend of land, containing ninety six acres, three rods, 24 poles, on the south side of the Appomattox River, in Charles City County, extending as followeth.

1, beginning at a point at a hickory, near Mr Whittington, thence along, his line 200 poles, along Mr Coopers, thence along his line to a corner, continueing by the same course, 40 poles to a small red oak, near by Cattail Branch, thence along the line 80 degrees; 80 poles to a head of a valley, to a white oak markedfour ways, 80 degrees, 56 poles, to Mr Whittington, thence along his line, then 20 poles along his line, northeast, by 80 degrees, 296 poles; north 6 poles; to a place aforementioned. The said land being due by transportation of two persons into this colony, to have and to hold etc...

Dated this day, the 27th day of October, 1673.

1673 land grant to William Bobbitt

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Handwritten text of the land grant document, including the date "October 27th 1673" and the names of the grantors and grantees.

FIGURE 184: The original of this land grant to William Bobbitt is in the Virginia State Archives at Richmond.

The record is from Land Grants, Book 8, page 481

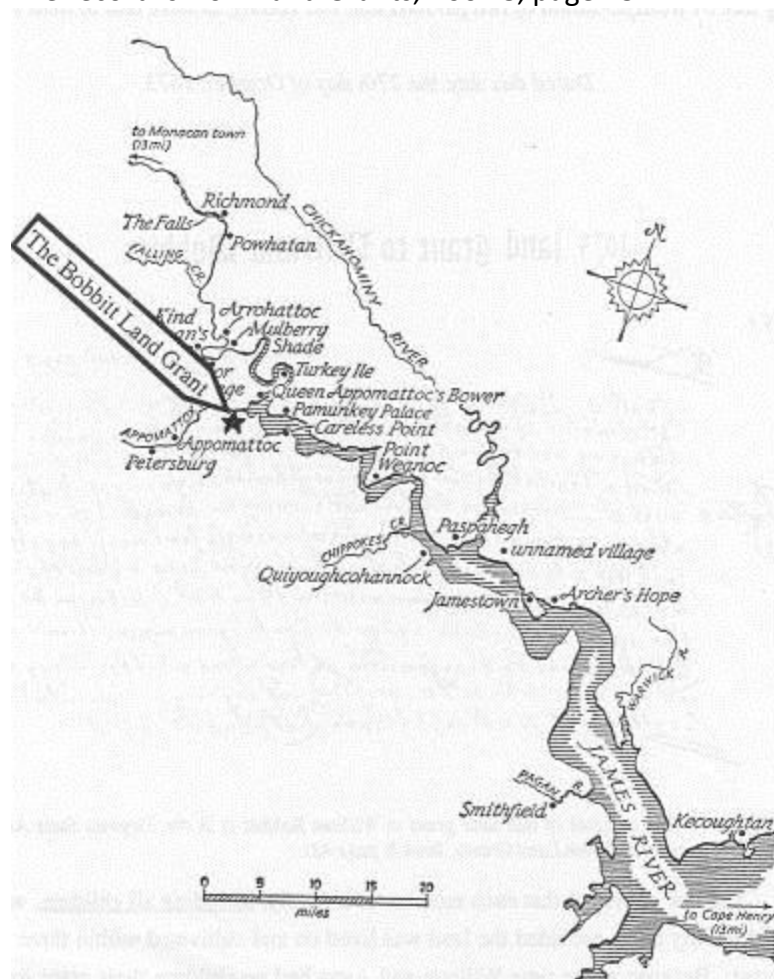


FIGURE 183: On October 27, 1673, William and Anna Bobbitt were granted 96 acres of land on the south bank of the Appomattox River near its junction with the James River.

The law provided that each member of a family, including all children, was to be entitled to fifty acres provided the land was lived on and cultivated within three years of the grant. Because at the time William and Anna had no children their grant was much smaller than their neighbors'. The little farm is nowadays included in its entirety within the Arlington section of the City of Hopewell, Virginia, bounded by state route 36 on the north, route 156 on the west and Bailey's Creek on the south.

A typical house in this western Tidewater Region of the colony was a one-room structure of logs or brick with a single fireplace at one end. Often there was a sleeping loft.

Small farmers could raise grain and vegetables for their own use, but the only cash crop was tobacco. Indeed the entire economy of the Virginia colony was based on tobacco. The cured leaf was actually used as a substitute for money, and exports of tobacco to Europe were the sole source of funds for purchase of all manufactured goods.

"Over the years planters had developed more efficient methods of tobacco cultivation. Now, instead of being sown broadcast as John Gerard had recommended, tobacco seed was first soaked for two or three days in milk or stale beer, then mixed with earth and set aside in a warm place until the sprouts appeared. Meanwhile, the patches, or beds, were being prepared. A tobacco patch was never plowed. A farmer might simply bum brush over the land he intended to sow, then hoe in the ashes. Another technique was to fertilize with the droppings of doves or swine (but not that of cattle-'cowpen tobacco' was thought to have a very strong flavor). When the plants were large enough, the seedlings were set out in hills, kept carefully weeded, and, if the weather was dry, watered daily just after sundown.



FIGURE 185: Tobacco as a cash crop made settlement in Virginia possible. Those early growers had no idea that they were introducing a health hazard of monumental proportions.

"When the plants reached a full two feet, they were topped, as in John Rolfe's day. (A few plants were allowed to form seeds for the following year's crop, but not many were needed - tobacco was and is one of the most prolific seed-producing plants in the world.) After topping, the plant would put forth suckers near the base of the leaves, and these had to be carefully pruned or they would sap the strength of the parent plant. Farmers were obliged to keep watch over the growing leaf for tobacco worms. On some plantations, a border of mustard was sown around a tobacco seedbed; the fly pests preferred mustard to tobacco and would feed on it instead.

"The crop was harvested in September, the entire plant being cut off near the ground. The stalk was pierced and strung with four or five other plants upside down on a "tobacco sticw" - pine lath about four feet long. These sticks were hung on scaffolds in the sun for a day or two, then taken inside the tobacco house to be cured.

"A Virginia tobacco house was not quite like any other farm structure anywhere. It was constructed of unchinked, loosely joined logs, was square in floor plan, and stood half again as tall as it was wide. Often two such sheds were built side by side, with space between them for a wagon to be driven in and out, a common roof over all. Upright timbers, four feet apart, formed racks to hold the four-foot tobacco sticks, which were mounted to the ceiling in carefully staggered order, so that air could circulate freely.

"The floor was of clay. If the weather was damp and there was danger that the crop would not dry out properly, fires were lighted, five feet or so apart, of low heat at first but gradually hotting up as the leaves turned color. Pungent hickory was the usual fuel, although some planters preferred sassafras or sweet-gum wood. During the drying process, the crudely constructed building gave off smoke from every chink and all the fields were overhung with haze. But normally the crop was simply left to age, usually until the following spring.

"When the tobacco had reached just the right stage (not too dark, not too light, not too moist, not too dry, not too cold, not too wann), it was 'struck' - taken down from the racks, the leaves gently stripped from the stalks, sorted out into various grades, and tied up into bunches of eight to twelve leaves called hands. A discarded leaf, twisted around the stems of the hand, bound it together. The hands were then piled up, pressed, and packed into hogsheads for shipment."

Not far from where William Bobbitt lived was the small plantation of Thomas Jefferson, the great grandfather of President Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson lived on 167 acres of land near the so-called falls of the James River and near the plantation of William Byrd. The William Byrd plantation was the real trading center of the area, and it was the place where most of the small planters took their tobacco for market and shipment to England. Byrd was a wealthy planter whose business interests beside tobacco included slave trade with the West Indies, speculation in land and a profitable fur trade with the Indians.

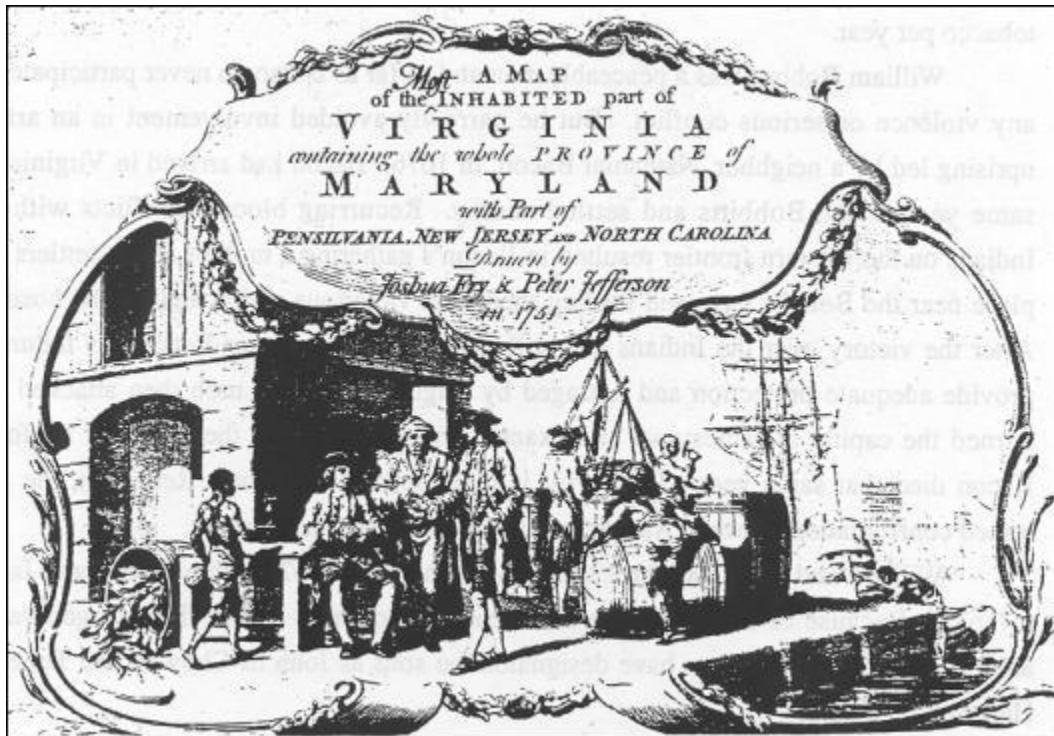


FIGURE 186: Hogsheads of tobacco being prepared for shipment. This is an illustration for a map made by Thomas Jefferson's father, Peter, who was a surveyor. Most of the small planters in the Bobbitts' neighborhood brought their tobacco to the William Byrd plantation for shipment overseas.

William and Anna Bobbitt were members of the Church of England. It was "the religion established by law in that country, from which there are very few dissenters. Yet liberty of conscience is given to all other congregations pretending to Christianity, on condition they submit to all Parish duties," wrote Robert Beverly in his 1705 *History and Present State of Virginia*. Beverly went on to say that in all Virginia there were only five congregations of other faiths, three Quaker and two Presbyterian.

The Bobbitt farm was located in Bristol Parish, a large sparsely populated expanse measuring twenty by forty miles. In such large parishes it was customary to have, in addition to the parish church, one or more "chappels of ease" or outlying mission chapels for the convenience of distant parishioners. The chapel attended by the Bobbitts was called the "Ferry Chappel" because it was near a ferry that crossed the Appomattox River at a site now occupied by the town of Petersburg, Virginia. The parish minister preached alternatively at the chapels, always appointing a layman to read the prayers and a homily when he could not attend himself. To maintain the minister of the Established Church the parishioners were required by law to pay 16,000 pounds of tobacco per year.

William Bobbitt was a peaceable man and as far as is known never participated in any violence or serious conflict. But he narrowly avoided involvement in an armed uprising led by a neighbor, Nathaniel Bacon, in 1676. Bacon had arrived in Virginia the same year as the Bobbitts and settled nearby. Recurring bloody conflicts with the Indians on the western frontier resulted in Bacon's gathering a mob of angry settlers at a place near the Bobbitt farm and leading them in a victorious action against the hostiles. After the victory over the Indians and still resentful of

Governor Berkeley's failure to provide adequate protection and outraged by English taxes, the mob then attacked and burned the capital at Jamestown and exacted concessions from the governor by force. Bacon died that same year. The revolt is remembered as Bacon's Rebellion, the first armed confrontation between American colonists and British authority.

William and Anna had three sons: William born in 1675, John in 1676 and James in 1678.

Because of the confusing recurrence of common names through generation after generation genealogists have designated the sons as John of Chowan and James of Hanover.

William of Wales, the first Bobbitt in Virginia, died in 1703 at age 54. He was buried in the churchyard cemetery at the Ferry Chapel. His grave now lies under the old Norfolk and Western Railroad station in the city of Petersburg, Virginia. By the English law of primogeniture his son William, as the eldest, inherited his land. William sold it in 1711 to John Peterson, using the money received to purchase land in Prince George County, Virginia.

John Bobbitt of Chowan (1678-1736)

John Bobbitt, the second son of William and Anna Bobbitt, is identified with Chowan Precinct in North Carolina because he was the first of the family to live outside Virginia.

In 1703 at age 25 and while still living in Virginia he married Sarah Green, sister to Mary Green, the wife of his older brother William. In 1704 John and Sarah's first child, a boy, was born and named after John's father William who had died the year before. They eventually had five children, two sons and three daughters.

In 1718 John and Sarah moved with their family to a 100 acre farm on the Morattock (now the Roanoke) River adjacent to the farm of Sarah's brother John Green. New land was so plentiful in those days that when tobacco plants had exhausted the nutrients in one parcel it was cheaper to move to new land than to fertilize. The new land was near the Chowan River settlement on Albemarle Sound in northeast North Carolina which had been settled by other colonists drifting down from Virginia. Already by 1676 the Chowan River settlement had a population of 3000. That first 100 acre farm was apparently a gift from Sarah's brother John. The transfer, dated February 27, 1718, but effective October 21, 1718, read: "John Green of Chowan Precinct to John Bobbitt of the same, planter, on October 21, 1718, for the love and affection I bear my brother-in-law, 100 acres on the north side of Morattock river on the Camion meadows, joining the Shokeko meadow and the said Green."

The farm was located at present-day Halifax, North Carolina, about 75 miles south of the first Bobbitt home on the Appomattox River in Virginia.

On March 1, 1719, John Bobbitt acquired another 600 acres, this time as a grant of public lands by patent. This tract was also located on the north side of the Morattock River "on the west side of the Occoneckeh Swamp." He sold 300 acres of the 600 acre grant in 1725 for ten pounds and the remaining 300 acres in 1736 for 30 pounds. The giveaway prices reflect again the ready availability of land, but the threefold appreciation in eleven years suggests that land was becoming more dear. His will mentioned still another 100 acres of land which he had bought and "tenanted to Roger Cass", but was bequeathing to his son Thomas.

John Bobbitt died in 1736. His wife had apparently died before him, because she was not included in the will which mentioned all his children.

The will was dated May 7, 1736, and it divided his property among all five children, rather than following the law of primogeniture. Note that the land went to the sons only, since women were not allowed to hold land in their own names:

In the name of God, Amen: I JOHN BOBBITT being sick and weak but of perfect and sound mind and memory, praised by the Almighty God, do make and declare this to be my last will and testament, revoking all former wills and testaments by me at any time heretofore made.

Imprimus: I will that my just debts and funeral expenses be first paid

Item: I give and bequeath unto my first son, William Bobbitt one hundred acres of land more or less, lying in the Orraneechy Neck-, whereon I now live, to hold him, his heirs and assigns forever

Item: I give and bequeath unto my son Thomas Bobbitt, one hundred acres of land lying in the Orraneechy Neck and which land I bought of John Landers now tenanted to Roger Cass, to hold to him, his heirs and assigns forever

Item: I give and bequeath unto my two sons and three daughters, named William, Thomas, Frances, Mary, and Amey, my whole and sole personal estate, movable and immovable, that is money, plates, beds, furniture, pewter, iron, brass, horses, mares, cattle, and all manner of estate goods and chattels, not herein mentioned, to be equally divided to and among said two sons and three daughters by even and equal portions. And lastly I do hereby appoint William Bobbitt, Robert Green, John Massey and James Brogran, my whole and sole executors of this my last will and testament, revoking all former wills by me at any time heretofore made. And I hope they will be my executors as becometh honest men and Christians.

Given under my hand and seal this seventh day of May Anno Domini 1736

JOHN  BOBBITT

The device which he placed between his given name and his surname was a symbol of his name and family. Marks such as this were the forerunners of cattle brands later used by western ranchers. The three diagonals are vaguely reminiscent, suggesting that John of Chowan may have been familiar with the design of the Bobbitt family coat of arms said to date from 1250 AD.

William Bobbitt (1704-1768)

William Bobbitt, eldest son of John of Chowan and Sarah Green Bobbitt, was born in the newly-formed Prince George County of Virginia in 1704 and named after his paternal grandfather. In 1718 when he was fourteen years of age he moved with his parents to Chowan Precinct, North Carolina.

As a young adult he was married to Amy Bennett, and the couple had two sons, John Richard, born in 1725, and William, Jr., born in 1727. They lived in what is today Warren County, North Carolina, just south of the Virginia border. In Warren County there remains to this day the largest concentration of Bobbitts in the United States. The village of Bobbitt, North Carolina, is located in adjacent Vance County.

Relatively little is known of this William Bobbitt. He sold 100 acres of land to a John Smart on February 19, 1744. The land was described as "in the fork of Buffaloe". This referred to a creek in present day Warren County, North Carolina. The 100 acres is presumably the land he inherited from his father who had died eight years earlier.

There is a record that he was called to jury duty in 1747, to attend court in the house of William L. Easton who lived three or four miles from Henderson, North Carolina.

He obtained from John, Earl Granville, (of Granville County) 600 acres of land for "three shillings of proclamation money" on March 25, 1749. The land was described as "in Parish of St. John on the south side of Little Fishing Creek." This land is also in present day Warren County. He sold

550 acres to Thomas Williams in July, 1754, and the remaining 50 acres to Daniel Harris a month later.
 He died in 1768.

Cattle & all manner of Estate Goods and Chats
 not here mentioned to be equally divided to and
 among my said Two Sons and three Daughters
 by two and Equal Portions. And lastly I
 do hereby Evinculate and appoint William
 Bobbit Robert Green John Massy and James
 Broughton my whole and sole Executors of this
 my last will and Testament revoking all
 former wills by me at any time heretofore
 made. I hope they will do my will executed
 as becometh honest men and true. Given
 under my hand and Seal this 10th day
 of May Anno Domini 1736
 John Bobbit

Witnessed
 Francis F. Massy Junr
 Richard Maffey Junr
 Francis F. Massy Junr

Witnessed
 Robert Maffey & James
 Maffey Two of the Neighbors
 attending witnesses thereto
 & also Robert Green & John
 Maffey Quillifer Ministers
 a Free Accusation to Law

FIGURE 187: A part of the last will and testament of John Bobbitt of Chowan. The arrow points to his "sign" which he placed between his given name and his surname.

John Richard Bobbitt (1725-1791)

John Richard Bobbitt was the first-born son of William Bobbitt and Amy Bennett Bobbitt. He was born in 1725 in what is now Warren County, North Carolina. His mother was a daughter of Richard Bennett. Tradition holds that he received his first name from his paternal grandfather and his middle name from his mother's father.

He married Amy Alston, daughter of John Alston, in 1743 when he was eighteen years of age. That same year he began a successful agricultural career by petitioning for a grant of 400 acres in Edgecombe County, North Carolina, a petition which was granted. On March 11, 1760, he was granted another 175 acres of land "on both sides of Fishing Creek, the great branch" by John, Earl Granville, the Viscount Carteret and Baron Carteret of Hawness in the County of Bedford, Kingdom of Great Britain. Needless to say, the land of the Earl of Granville was in Granville County. Three years later, on May 23, 1763, John Richard purchased another 300 acres from Francis Capps.

On July 16, 1767, he sold to Peter Smart 295 acres of land "exclusive of two acres around the Baptist Meeting House and spring". The price for the 295 acres was 110 pounds, Virginia money. The price of land was escalating! One other interesting feature of this sale besides the rising value of land was the mention of a Baptist Meeting House. The first Baptist Association in Virginia had been organized in 1756, and in the next two decades the Baptist movement had spread rapidly.³ The fact that John Richard referred to it as a "Meeting House" rather than a church suggests that he still adhered to the Church of England. On the other hand the very fact that the "meeting house" was located on land which he owned might indicate that he had joined the Baptist movement himself.

John Richard and Amy Alston Bobbitt had ten children who lived to maturity. Their names and the years of their births were:

Drury Bobbitt	1744
Winnine Bobbitt	1746
Stephen Bobbitt	1747
John Bobbitt	1749
Alston Bobbitt	1752
Isham Bobbitt	1754
Randolph Bobbitt	1755
Sally Bobbitt	1758
William Bobbitt	1761
Amy Bobbitt	1763



FIGURE 188: Slaves filling and transporting hogsheads of tobacco. The system of human beings "owning" other human beings and bequeathing them like cattle to their heirs is repugnant to modern sensibilities. Slave owners rationalized the practice by referring to scripture and by claiming that enslaved blacks were better off than in their 'natural state'.

In a material sense John Richard was the most successful of all those in the direct Bobbitt line. A tax list in 1771 reveals that he had four slaves, Okey, Lacy, Ned and Jimmy. Fifteen years later the North Carolina State Census of 1786 reported that he owned seventeen slaves. In the taxable year of 1790 he was considered the fourth wealthiest "planter" in his district, he and his four older sons owning ten per cent of the taxable property in the entire area. The source of his wealth was the tobacco produced on his plantation by slave labor. The financial success was achieved in spite of low prices for tobacco caused by overproduction in both Virginia and North Carolina.³

The last twenty years of John Richard's life were tumultuous ones in American history. England had gone into debt as a result of colonial wars against Spain, France and the Indians and was now attempting to solve some of its financial problems by imposing a series of taxes and commercial restrictions on the American colonies. The Navigation Acts passed many years previous but never strictly enforced were now requiring that tobacco produced in the colonies be exported only to England, thus allowing English merchants to redirect it into international trade at a profit. Other Navigation Acts required that goods imported into the colonies, even if originating in other nearby colonies, had to be landed in England first. Additional onerous measures included the Quartering Act, the infamous Stamp Act, and the Townshend Acts which placed import duties on tea, paper, lead and paint.

North Carolina was the first colony to instruct its delegates to the Continental Congress to vote for independence from Great Britain.⁴ The Bobbitts supported the move for independence, and two of John Richard's sons, Isham and William, served in the Revolutionary Army. Isham was

present at the Battle of Guilford Court House near Greensboro, North Carolina, on March 15, 1781, and later was a part of the American Army which pursued General Cornwallis' troops to Yorktown. William was wounded in the action at Guilford Court House.

John Richard lived to hear of George Washington's inauguration as first president of the United States in 1789, then he died in 1791 at age 66. His will, dated December 7, 1789, named all his children and the two grandchildren living at the time. The daughters were all mentioned by their given names and the surnames of their husbands. It read:

IN THE NAME OF GOD, "EN;

I, John Bobbitt of Warren County, being sick and old, but of sound mind, and calling to mind, the manifold blessings that Bountiful Providence has bestowed on me, and that it is appointed to all men, once to die.

I do make and ordain this to be my last will and testament in manner and form following, and after recommending my soul to God, who gave it to me, and my body to be decently buried at the discretion of my executors and friends. I would next endeavour to dispose of what little worldly property it hath pleased the Almighty God to bless me with.

I give or rather lend, to my wife Amy Bobbitt, during her natural life, the following negroes. Namely: Roger and Pheby and at the death of my beloved wife, Roger is to pass and go to my son Drury Bobbitt and his heirs, and the negro girl Pheby, with her increase, to be equally divided between my two grandchildren now living with me, to wit: Lewis and John, sons of Randolph Bobbitt. I also lend to my beloved wife, two feather beds and furniture, one of which, at her death, is to go to my son Isham, and the other of them, that she chooses to give it to, as also to have nine head of the choice of my stock of cattle, with a yoke of oxen, for the use of the plantation together with the use of all the house and kitchen furniture, and at her decease to be equally divided amongst all my children and their representatives. Also one bay mare, also one third part of all my stock of hogs and sheep and together with the house I now live in and any part of my land that she may think fit to live on during her natural life.

I give to my son Drury Bobbitt five pounds in money.

I give to my son, John Bobbin one negro man, now in his care, which I formerly lent him and twenty shillings in money.

I give to my daughter, Sally Dardin, one negro boy, now in her care, named Warren.

I give to my daughter Winney Golightly, two negroes, Nancy and Paster, with their increase, to her and her heirs forever

I give to my son, Stephen Bobbitt, one negro fellow called Lem, now in his possession and five cows and calves.

I lend to my son, Isham Bobbitt, during his life, two negroes, Alice and Abbey and at his decease the said negroes with their increase to be equally divided between all of his children and their representatives.

I give to my daughter, Amy James, during her life one negro, Violet and at her decease to go to her son Willie James.

I give to my son, William Bobbitt, one negro man by the name of Okey, together with a parcel of land adjoining him above my old line to the mill path, supposed to be about fifty acres.

I give and bequeath to my son Randolph Bobbitt, all that tract of land, I live on, after the use, lent to his mother, supposed to be about three hundred acres and about fifty acres of pine woods. Also one negro fellow named Jesse, also one sorrell horse, five cows and calves, and

two other young cattle of his choice, and one bed and furniture, and all the residue of my estate, hogs and cattle not herein given away, to be sold and the money to be equally divided amongst all my children, and lastly I appoint my two sons, Drury and Stephen to be my executors of this my last will and testament, in witness whereof, I have set my hand and seal this SEVENTH DAY OF DECEMBER 1789.

JOHNBOBBITT

Amy Alston Bobbitt survived her husband by five years, then died in 1796.

Isham Bobbitt (1754-1836)

Isham was one of the most interesting individuals in the direct Bobbitt lineage, not only because he was a soldier in the Revolutionary War, but also because of the many moves in his lifetime which eventually placed this branch of the family north of the Mason-Dixon Line.

He was born on May 3, 1754, the sixth child of John Richard and Amy Alston Bobbitt in Granville, now Warren County, North Carolina. He married Elizabeth James in Halifax County, North Carolina, on October 13, 1774, when he was twenty years old. The couple's first four children were born between 1775 and 1779 and before his military service.

He volunteered for duty in the American army about February 1, 1780. By his own account he was present at the Camden, South Carolina, debacle of August 16, 1780, and at the hard-fought Battle of Guilford Court House only 100 miles west of his home on March 15, 1781. In that bloody battle the Americans suffered 1100 casualties, and the British lost 406. His description of his service includes more detail of his many tedious marches through the Carolinas than of the actual fighting, suggesting that his position on the field may have been fairly peripheral. His brother William, however, was wounded in the Guilford Court House battle, receiving a musket ball shot through his thigh.

Typically an individual infantryman such as Isham was concerned with his immediate surroundings and unaware of the greater picture of the military engagement overall. The Camden, South Carolina, fiasco came about when the incompetent American General Horatio Gates challenged General Cornwallis and his British regulars who were occupying Charleston. Gates had grossly overestimated the numerical strength of his own American forces and failed to recognize that they were untrained and poorly equipped. When Cornwallis' seasoned troops fired a volley and charged with bayonets the Virginia and North Carolina militias panicked and fled. The cowardly General Gates led the way to the rear on the fastest horse he could find. The Battle of Guilford Court House was another story. The Americans had found a real commander in Major General Nathanael Greene. General Greene selected the battle site carefully and formulated a master battle plan. Just as a frontal assault by Cornwallis' troops appeared to be succeeding a flanking attack by American cavalry reversed the tide. As opposing infantry were engaged hand to hand Cornwallis, in desperation, ordered his artillery to fire grapeshot into the mass of contesting troops, killing his own as well as Americans. Technically it was a British victory, but Cornwallis, thousands of miles from home and any hope of possible reinforcements, had lost irreplaceable troops in numbers he could not afford to be without. He retired to Wilmington, North Carolina, then began the long march to Yorktown where he eventually surrendered.

(Photo missing)

At the end of the Revolutionary War Isham. returned home to Warren County, North Carolina, and resumed his family life. Soon thereafter, in 1782, he moved his family to Guilford County, North Carolina. He and Elizabeth eventually had eleven children who lived to maturity. They were: William James, Drury Allen, Winney, Stephen, John William, Amy, Frances, Elizabeth, Isham Drury, Sarah and Nancy.

In 1789 Isham moved to Spartanburg County, South Carolina, with his wife and family. His last three children were born there. Before leaving Guilford County he had entrusted to a relative for safekeeping a box containing his army discharge and ten thousand dollars in Continental currency. When he returned five years later to reclaim the box of papers he found that the box and its contents had been destroyed. The loss was not as great as it might seem, for the Continental money printed during the war was essentially worthless, hence the expression, "not worth a Continental".

The early 1800's were difficult years, and the promise of a more prosperous life in the developing West was luring many across the Appalachians. In 1803 Isham. and Elizabeth moved once again, this time to Christian County in western Kentucky where they remained for twenty-four years. By now the Bobbitts were staunch Baptists. The fourth son, John William Bobbitt, was ordained a Baptist minister, and he performed the nuptials for many of his siblings in Kentucky.

Isham and Elizabeth moved to Morgan County in west central Illinois in the spring of 1827. Isham was now 73 years old. The Federal Government passed an act on June 7, 1832, providing pensions for soldiers who had served in the Revolutionary War, and Isham applied for his pension on September 3, 1832. The amount he received is not recorded, but his brother William is known to have received a pension of \$34.99 12er year for his service in the same war! Isham's and Elizabeth's house burned in 1834, and they went to live with their daughter and son-in-law Nancy and John Chrisman, also in Morgan County, Illinois. Isham died March 6, 1836. By virtue of an act of Congress passed in 1838 Elizabeth was entitled to half her husband's veteran's pension. She died on March 6, 1847, eleven years to the day after Isham's death.

Because of his Revolutionary War service Isham's name is engraved on a metal plaque at the Morgan County, Illinois, Court House. In 1938 his remains and his grave stone were removed from an old grave yard which had become a farmer's pasture over-run by livestock and moved to a landscaped Bobbin lot in Chapin Cemetery at Chapin, Morgan County, Illinois.

Isham Drury Bobbin (1790-1865)

Isham Drury Bobbin was the ninth of eleven children and the youngest son of Isham and Elizabeth (James) Bobbitt. He was named after his father and an uncle named Drury Bobbitt. His grandfather was John Richard Bobbitt, the wealthy planter of Warren County, North Carolina. He was born in 1790 in Spartanburg County, South Carolina. When he was thirteen years of age he moved with the family to Christian County in southwest Kentucky.

At age 23 during the War of 1812 he was a private in Caldwell's First Regiment of Mounted Volunteers, Kentucky Militia. The War of 1812 is remembered mostly for naval battles and the burning of the White House by the British, but there was significant action in the West, much of it involving the Kentucky Militia. William Henry Harrison, later president of the United States, was made a major general in the Kentucky Militia. He persuaded Kentucky's Governor Shelby, himself a Revolutionary War veteran, to raise a large force to oppose the British who

had invaded Ohio from Canada. The governor nor circulated recruiting handbills, and more than 3000 Kentuckians responded to the call. Isham Drury Bobbin was apparently among them. The British retreated from Ohio under pressure by the Kentuckians who went on to occupy Detroit and to pursue the British into Canada. Near Moraviantown, Ontario, the British made a stand on October 5, 1813, resulting in an action known as the Battle of Thames River. Richard M. Johnson's regiment of Kentucky Mounted Volunteers led the assault. Lacking sabers, they galloped through the enemy line brandishing muskets. The unorthodox cavalry charge overwhelmed the thin British defenses and forced a complete surrender. Richard A Johnson became an instant hero and was elected Vice President of the United States in 1836.⁶ Isham Drury Bobbitt and Caldwell's First Regiment of Mounted Volunteers did not share in the glory and may not even have been on hand for the battle.

On December 18, 1824, Isham married Cynthia Ann Haggard in Trigg County, Kentucky. He was 34 years of age, unusually old, especially for those days, to be marrying for the first time. The bride was 15 years old. The ceremony was conducted by John W. Bobbitt, a Baptist minister and older brother of the groom. Cynthia Ann Haggard was a daughter of David and Nancy (Dawson) Haggard of Albemarle County, Virginia. The father of the bride and the father of the groom were both Revolutionary War veterans.

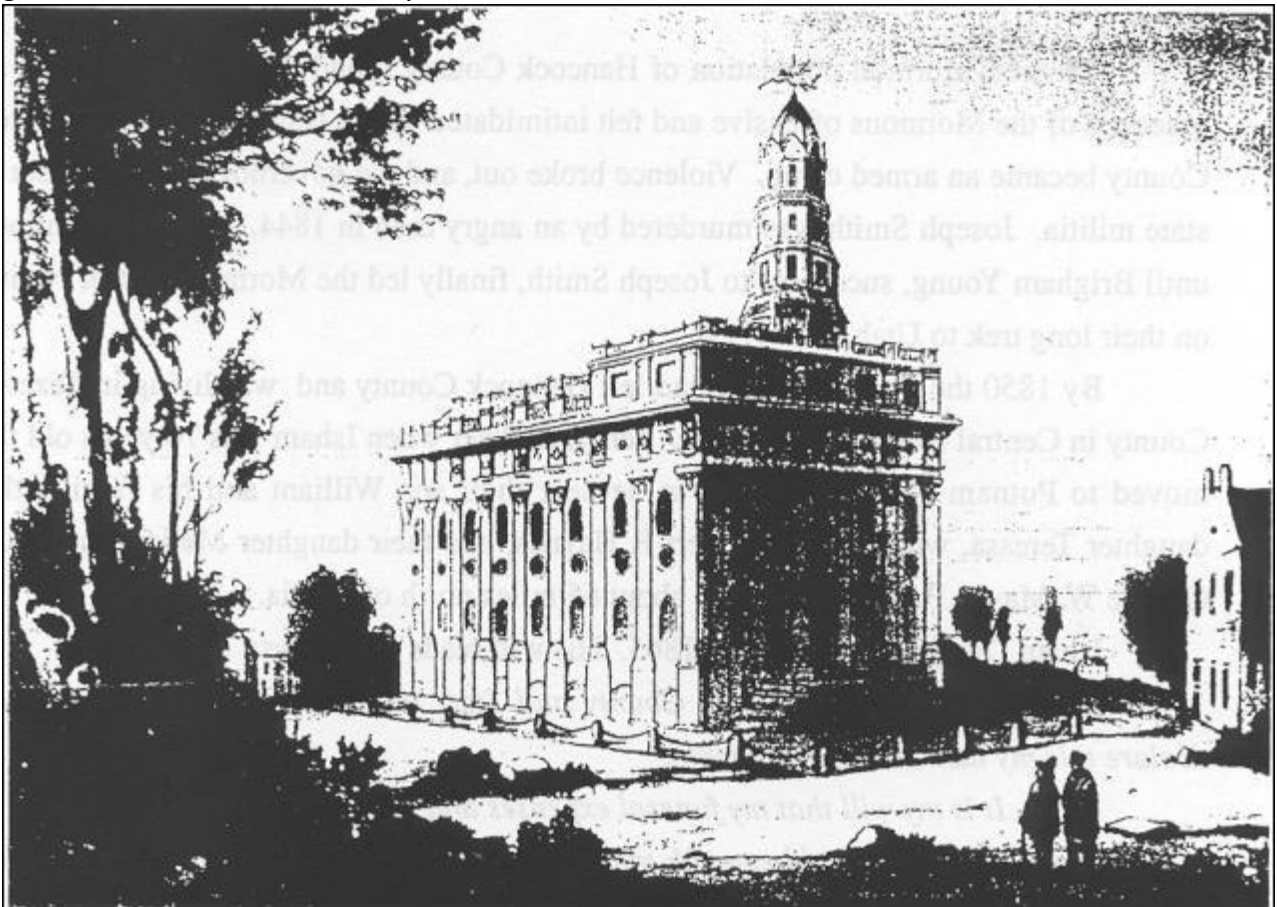


FIGURE 190: The Mormons built this temple at Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, but left for Utah before they were able to make use of it.

The couple had five children: Teressa born in 1826, William W. born in 1829, John William born in 1832, Malissa born in 1835 and David Frank born in 1840. The family moved to

Clark County, Kentucky, in 1830 to be near Cynthia's mother and father. They lived near Winchester about 16 miles east of Lexington, Kentucky. In 1834 they moved to Hancock County, Illinois, on the Iowa border near Keokuk. The Illinois county they chose was anything but peaceful. In 1839, just five years after their arrival, Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon church, bought land in Hancock County and brought along his followers who had been driven out of Ohio and Missouri. They founded a town which they named Nauvoo, and the colony they established there attracted Mormon converts from all over the East. By 1845 it was the largest city in Illinois with a population of more than 16,000. The Mormons established a militia, the Nauvoo Legion, which was the largest armed force in the nation, except for the US. Army. The non-Mormon population of Hancock County found the religious beliefs and practices of the Mormons offensive and felt intimidated by the Nauvoo Legion. Hancock County became an armed camp. Violence broke out, and the governor had to call out the state militia. Joseph Smith was murdered by an angry mob in 1844. Violence continued until Brigham Young, successor to Joseph Smith, finally led the Mormons out of Nauvoo on their long trek to Utah in 1847.^{7,8}

By 1850 the Bobbitt family had left Hancock County and was living in Tazewell County in Central Illinois near Peoria. Ten years later when Isham was 70 years old they moved to Putnam County, Illinois, to be near their son William and his family, their daughter Teressa, wife of Rev. Robert R Haynes, and their daughter Melissa married to George W. Mays. Putnam County is about 65 miles north of Peoria. Isham Drury Bobbitt died in 1865. His will reads as follows: I, Isham Bobbitt of Putnam County and State of Illinois, do hereby make and declare this my last will and testament. First: It is my will that my funeral expenses and all my just debts be paid. Second: I devise and bequeath to my beloved wife, Cynthia Ann Bobbitt, the farm on which I now live in all about 120 acres, during her widowhood, and all cattle, horses and hogs by me now owned, also all the household furniture, and other articles of personal property not herein mentioned,

Third: It is my will that my children shall each be charged upon this my last will with the amount that I have heretofore bestowed upon them severally, and what they may otherwise be owing to me, and their obligations be delivered to them upon their giving their receipts for the amount to my executors, hereinafter appointed.

Fourth: It is my will that after the marriage or decease of my wife, that what may be left and remaining shall be so divided that each of my children with what they have already received shall share equally. I hereby appoint my son-in-law Robert F Haynes and my son, William W. Bobbitt, executors.

ISHAM X BOBBITT

In 1871 Cynthia Ann Bobbitt moved to Richardson County in southeast Nebraska to live with her youngest son, David Frank Bobbitt. She died at her son David Frank's home which at the time, 1885, was in Kansas City, Missouri. Her obituary is as follows:

Died, At the home of her son, Frank Bobbitt in Kansas City, Missouri, on Thursday, February 25, 1885, in the 77th year of her age, Mrs. Cynthia A. Bobbitt. The subject of the above notice was born near Winchester, Kentucky, and her maiden name was Haggard. She was married at the age of fifteen to Isham Bobbitt, who died about twenty years ago. They moved to Illinois in 1834 where she lived until she came west about four years ago. She was an honored member and a

consistent member of the Baptist church for sixty years. She was the mother of five children, three sons, who are still living, and two daughters who are dead. The remains were brought to this city and according to her request, the funeral was preached at the residence of her son, John W. Bobbitt, three miles northeast of Virdon, on Saturday last by.. and was buried in the Liberty Cemetery. On account of some mistake, the telegram sent to Mr J. W. Bobbitt did not reach him, and he was not aware of the sad news until his brother arrived with the body. The Liberty Cemetery was located on the Bobbitt farm, which in 1976 belonged to an E. L. Brown. In recent years it has come to be known as the Stratton Cemetery. In 1976 it was declared a neglected pioneer cemetery and was restored.⁹

John William Bobbitt (1832-1909)

John William Bobbitt was the third child and second son of Isham. Drury Bobbitt and Cynthia (Haggard) Bobbitt. He was born June 9, 1832, near the village of Winchester in Clark County, Kentucky, about 16 miles east of Lexington in the Bluegrass Country. He was the grandson of Isham and Elizabeth (James) Bobbitt and of David and Nancy (Dawson) Haggard. When he was two years old the family moved to Hancock County, Illinois, where they lived near his father's older brothers, William J. Bobbitt and Stephen Bobbitt.



John & Julia (Holt) Bobbitt

He married Julia Hoyt on October 21, 1852, in Marshall County, Illinois. The ceremony was conducted by Reverend Robert F. Haynes, his brother-in-law and the husband of his sister, Teresa. John William was 20 years of age, and Julia was 18. She was born September 6, 1834, at Dayton, Ohio.²¹ Her father was James Hoyt, whose family were from Stamford, Connecticut, and her mother was Maria Hitchcock Hoyt, born in New York City.

John William Bobbitt was six feet three inches tall with a large frame. He had kindly features and a soft drawl. He was a jovial fellow, described years later by a granddaughter as much loved and "a lot of fun at times".

His bride, Julia Hoyt Bobbitt, on the other hand, was only four feet, ten or eleven inches in height, and petite in features as well. She was a pretty one, neat as a pin, but restless and quick and fiery in disposition. She lacked her husband's sense of humor and seldom regarded anything as funny.¹⁰

The couple lived in Illinois for twenty-six years, producing nine children:

John Seymour Bobbitt	born November 7, 1853
Cornelia Olive Bobbitt	born March 8, 1856
James Clarence Bobbitt	born July 28, 1858
Willis R. Bobbitt	born December 21, 1860
Sarah Elinor Bobbitt	born November 12, 1862
Francis Marion Bobbitt	born June 9, 1868
Jessie Julia Bobbitt	born March 3, 1872
Allen Eugene Bobbitt	born January 27, 1877

Another child, Theresa Maria, died in infancy. Although John William was 29 years of age at the beginning of the Civil War in 1861 he was already the father of four young children and therefore not required to serve in the military.

In 1880 the family moved to Liberty Precinct, Richardson County, Nebraska, near the town of Dawson in the extreme southeast corner of the state. John William had bought some farm land there, located four miles northwest of the village of Verdon.²¹

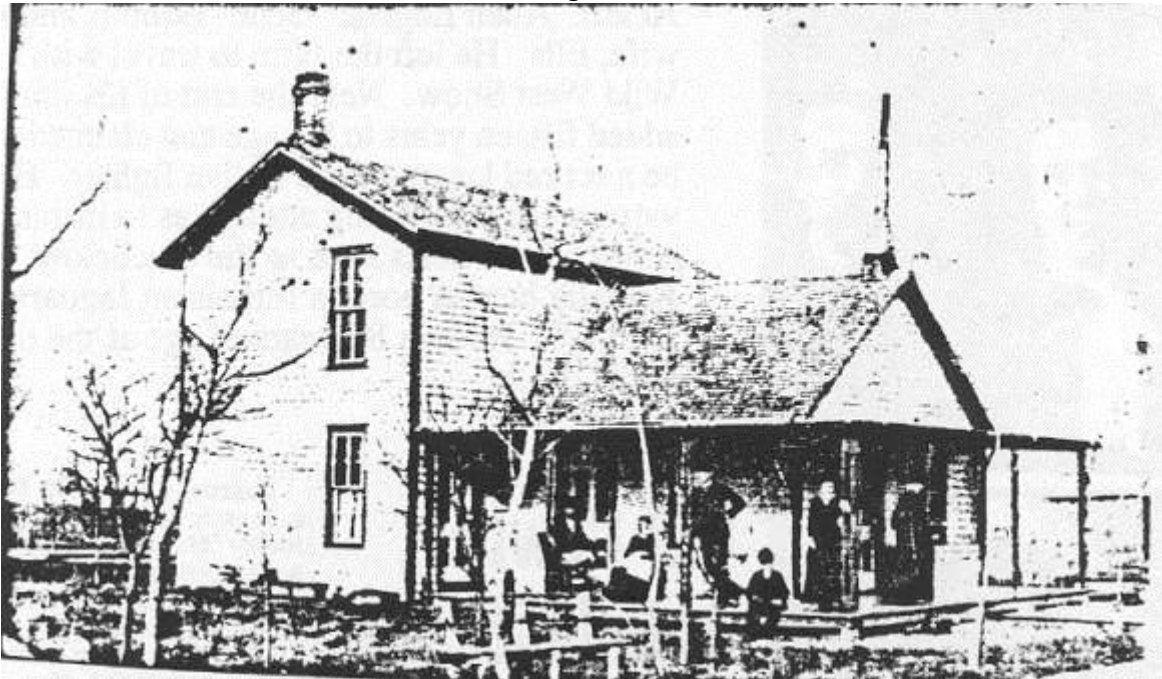


FIGURE 192: The house in Western Nebraska near Sutherland. Posing about 1889 are L to R: John Williant Bobbitt, Julia Hoyt Bobbitt, Francis Marion Bobbitt, Allen Eugene Bobbitt, Jessie Bobbin Loudon and Sarah Elinor "Nellie " Bobbitt Seitz.

About ten years later the family moved once again, this time to a farm seven miles south of the town of Sutherland in Western Nebraska. John acquired the property by paying the owner, Charles Richards, the sum of two hundred and forty-five dollars in cash and assuming two mortgages of eight hundred dollars and one hundred and sixty dollars respectively. The farm consisted of 160 acres of fairly good land, considering the light soil and scant rainfall characteristic of the region. The farm house of one and one-half stories was adequate and typical of the time and place. The legal description of the property was NE 1/4 of Section 2, Township 12 North, Range 34, Lincoln County, Nebraska.

After successive crop failures in Western Nebraska John William sold the Lincoln County farm to his son Willis for five hundred dollars cash and assumption of the eight hundred dollar mortgage on June 9, 1892.²⁴ Then with his wife Julia he moved for a while to a farm near Anthony in Harper County, Kansas, 10 and later to Woods County, Oklahoma, where his sons Jim, Francis and Gene and their families were then living. (At that time, before Oklahoma statehood, Woods County was much larger than today, encompassing all of present day Alfalfa and Major Counties, including the towns of Ringwood and Fairview.) Jim had a large fruit farm, berry patch and vineyard. His cinnamon, white and concord grapes grew profusely but sometimes brought as little as three cents per pound.²⁵ (Some of Jim's descendants still live in that part of northern Oklahoma and southern Kansas). Francis and Gene lived on farms south of Ringwood.



At left: He left the farm to travel with a Wild West Show. Near the end of his life he added fifteen years to his age and claimed to be a retired law man and Indian fighter. His yarns were convincing enough as to inspire newspaper articles such as the one below. Actually he was born in Illinois on January 27, 1877. He was 86 years of age at the time of his death.

At right: By Richard Wilbur Rocky Mountain News

When he went, Al Bobbitt went the way he wanted to, they said. At the age of 101, the lifelong cowboy had been benched for some time in a guest home here, 'operated by Mrs. Frances Jent at 1649 Race St.

He was in a rocking chair on the porch when he died, quietly, Christmas morning. He was all togged out in his favorite blue Western outfit, Mrs. Jent said. **With Boots On.** "He always said he wanted to die with his boots on," she recalled, "and they were."

Eugene Allen (Al) Bobbitt only a month ago reminisced to The Rocky Mountain News about his active outdoors life since his birth during the Civil War, on Jan. 27, 1862.

Less than three years ago, his agility astounded Mrs. Ruth Lehr of Morrison.

"I saw him ride a horse at 98," said Mrs. Lehr, who at one time helped care for Bobbitt in the Pine Haven Nursing Home in Morrison.

For the News last month, Bobbitt recalled being captured by Sioux Indians after he left Kentucky and went to the Dakota territory . . . serving as a deputy U.S. marshal in the Cherokee Strip of Oklahoma before the great land rush . . . and friends told of his having performed in many rodeos in the early American West.

Still Tell Tales Old cowboys around Middle, Park and South Park still tell: tales about Bobbitt, according to Reuben Squire of 380 Harlan St.

John William bought a property at Cleo, a small town ten miles west of Ringwood, in 1902 for \$60. It was described as lots 22, 23 and 24 of block 23. He and Julia lived at Cleo for about a year, then decided to move to Ringwood, because their son Francis had left his farm and was now operating a general store there. On February 21,

RINGWOOD

MAJOR COUNTY OKLA.

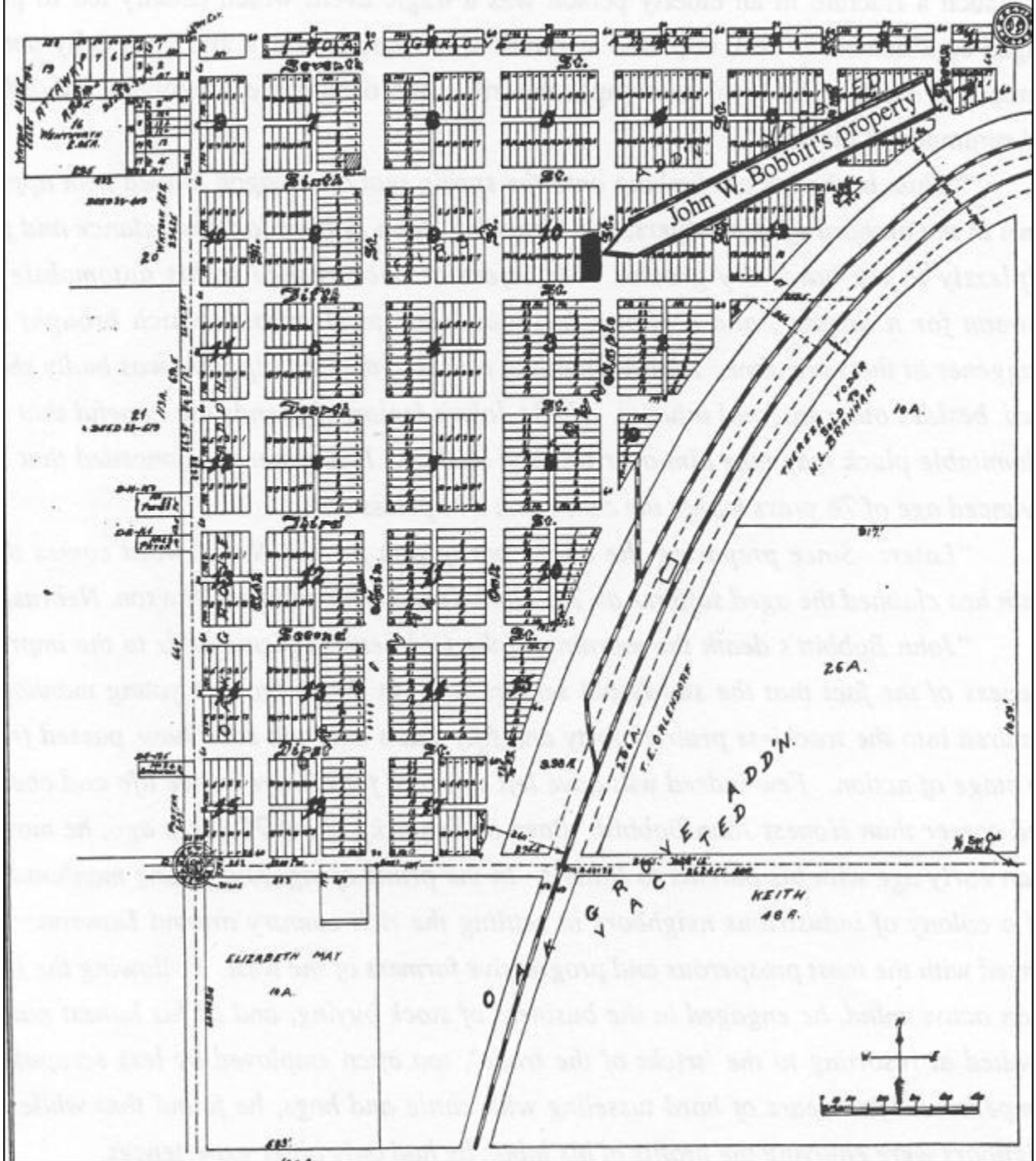


FIGURE 193: Ringwood, named for the ring of woods which surrounded it, was a new town in the early 1900's. John William Bobbitt's home was two blocks east of Main Street where his son

Francis operated a general store. The Rock, Island branch line from Enid turned south at Ringwood and ended at Lawton.

1903, they purchased for \$175 lots 23 and 24, block 10, First Addition to Ringwood, located on the northwest corner of Fifth Street and Maple Avenue.²⁶ He and Julia lived there another three years, then in 1906 after Francis had moved his family to Decatur County, Kansas, they sold out and moved back to the more familiar environs of Richardson County, Nebraska, about forty miles northwest of St. Joseph, Missouri.

He lived his final eight years there in Southeast Nebraska, then suffered the accident, a broken hip, which led to his death. In those days before hip surgery and antibiotics such a fracture in an elderly person was a tragic event which usually led to prolonged confinement in bed, impaired respiration, ineffective cough and eventually pneumonia and death. The local newspaper described the occurrence on August 24, 1909, and summarized his life:

"While in the act of climbing onto the spring seat of a wagon loaded with apples down in the orchard of O. C Ayers, last Thursday, John Bobbitt lost his balance and fell helplessly to the hard, dry ground. Mr Ayers at once rushed in his automobile to Dawson for a doctor, and a phone call was made to Humboldt which brought Dr. Waggener at the same time. An investigation revealed that the hip joint was badly shattered, besides other internal injuries. Uncle John's legion of friends are hopeful that his indomitable pluck may take him over this sad mishap. It is generally conceded that his advanced age of 78 years makes the case seem a hopeless one.

"Later. Since preparing the above paragraph for the News, word comes that death has claimed the aged sufferer at 7 o'clock Tuesday morning in Dawson, Nebraska.

"John Bobbitt's death the morning of the Old Settlers picnic adds to the impressiveness of the fact that the sturdy old settlers who, in their vigorous young manhood, ventured into the trackless prairies forty and fifty years ago will soon have passed from the stage of action. Few indeed will have left a record for a more active life and checkered career than Honest John Bobbitt. Born in Kentucky about 78 years ago, he moved at an early age with his parents to Illinois. In the prime of vigorous young manhood he led a colony of industrious neighbors in settling the rich country around Dawson. He ranked with the most prosperous and progressive farmers of the west. Following the bent of an active mind, he engaged in the business of stock buying, and as his honest nature revolted at resorting to the 'tricks of the trade', too often employed by less scrupulous competitors, after years of hard tussling with cattle and hogs, he found that while his neighbors were enjoying the profits of his labor, he had only bitter experiences.

"Some twenty years ago with the idea of re-establishing himself and his family on a firm basis on land, he moved to western Nebraska, where he had only crop failures. He next sifted down to Kansas, where a similar experience awaited him. Notwithstanding all the business reverses and keen disappointments, Uncle John's intrepid spirit was such that he never conceived the idea of admitting that he was 'down and out'. Dutiful children had often tried to make him desist from self imposed cares, up to the moment of the sad accident. He was ambitious in providing a home and a competency for a faithful wife, as the most ardent and faithful lover

"Besides the aged wife, four sons and three daughters are left to mourn the loss of a loving parent, who if he did not bequeath a vast estate, left a reputation for sterling honesty, something more enviable than the memory of a sordid wealth. "

What the newspaper account did not mention was that the Dr. Waggener who arrived from the nearby town of Humboldt was John William's nephew, Dr. Will Waggener. Another nephew, Dr. J. T. Waggener, was a medical student at the time, but at home on vacation. He nursed his uncle through the night, but saw him die of shock just before morning, providentially spared the prolonged agony which in those days usually followed hip fractures in the elderly.²² After her husband's death Julia (Hoyt) Bobbitt went to live with her daughter "Nellie" Seitz at Cortez, Colorado. She died there on July 28, 1923. Interestingly in that day of nearly universal religious affiliation she had made no formal faith commitment. The newspaper account of her death stated, "Altho Grandma never openly professed Christ she lived an ideal life, devoted to her family, happy in ministering to friends and neighbors in Pioneer Days." Rev. Underkaffer had charge of the funeral services which he held at the home of her daughter, Mrs. H.J. (Cornelia) Shier and not at his church. Both Julia and her husband John William were buried in a family plot near Dawson, Nebraska.²¹

Francis Marion Bobbitt (1868-1906)

Francis Marion Bobbitt was the seventh child and fourth son of John William Bobbitt and Julia (Hoyt) Bobbitt. He was born on June 9, 1868, in Marshall County, Illinois, northeast of Peoria. The origin of his name is an interesting puzzle. He had an uncle, David Frank Bobbitt, and an older cousin, Franklin Mays, but there is no evidence of any previous Bobbitt named Francis or Marion. It is tempting to speculate that he was named after the South Carolina Revolutionary War hero, Francis Marion, known as 'The Swamp Fox'.



FIGURE 195: Francis Marion Bobbitt as a child and at about age 20

A widely circulated biography of Marion published in 1809 reads as follows: "A captivating melange of popular heroism, religion and morality compounded of fact and much fiction, firmly established Francis Marion in the American imagination as the Robin Hood of the Revolution. Post offices and towns and counties as far away as the Pacific Coast were named for him."¹²

Possibly the Francis Marion cult was still alive in Illinois when the Bobbitt baby was born. He grew up in Marshall County, Illinois, and Richardson County, Nebraska, surrounded by his large family. When he was about 21 years of age his father decided to move to western Nebraska where land was cheaper and more plentiful. Francis accompanied his parents and the younger siblings to the area just southwest of the confluence of the North Platte and the South Platte Rivers near Sutherland, Nebraska.

On that High Plains section of western Nebraska he met a young school teacher, Julia Comstock. She was from Marble Rock, Iowa, but had come west to visit her Aunt Lucy Gurnmere and had stayed to teach one term of school. The farm of John and Lucy Gurnmere was five miles west and one mile north of the Bobbin farm,²⁴ Close enough for a romance to develop. The young couple were married at North Platte on March 23, 1890.¹¹



Nebraska at North Platte
 Twenty third day of March 1890
 Francis M. Bobbitt and Julia L. Comstock

of Verdon, Nebraska of Marble Rock, Iowa
May F. Besack, D. W. Besack Witnesses; W. A. Amsbary, Minister



FIGURE 196: Francis Marion Bobbitt and Julia Comstock Bobbitt on their wedding day, March 23, 1890.

Meanwhile Francis' father had learned why the land in Western Nebraska was so cheap. One crop failure after another had convinced him that this place was no good for a proper farmer. He moved several times more before returning to the more bountiful environs of Richardson County, Nebraska. With youthful optimism the newly weds Francis and Julia remained near Sutherland while he tried two or three more farming seasons. Two babies were born to the couple there, each dying in infancy. The first was a girl born in May, 1891. They named her

Marvel. She died at age three months, 17 days and was buried in a little country cemetery eight miles southeast of the village of Paxton, Nebraska. The second was a boy born in September, 1892. They named him John William after Francis' father, but he died at age 24 days. He was buried beside his infant sister. The little cemetery was eventually abandoned, and the babies' single gravestone which was inscribed, "Darlings, we miss you, gone too soon," was moved to the cemetery at Oberlin, Kansas, near their parents' graves in 1970.¹⁰ At last a healthy little boy was born on August 27, 1893. They named him Ray Ivor.

By now Francis had reluctantly concluded that his father had correctly assessed the prospects for farming in Western Nebraska. The soil and scant rainfall were more suitable for grazing than for cultivation. He began to look elsewhere.

The land rush for claims in the Cherokee Outlet in Indian Territory, Oklahoma, had occurred on September 16, 1893, only weeks after the birth of baby Ray. More than 100,000 settlers had raced for the 40,000 available claims then, but other Indian lands were still being opened up for settlement.¹³ Francis set out for Oklahoma Territory by horseback in the spring of 1894. He arrived at a homestead near Sand Springs (a village now within the city limits of present-day Tulsa) in time to plant the spring crops.¹⁴



FIGURE 197: Main Street, Tulsa, Indian Territory, Summer of 1897

He worked hard that lonely summer in Oklahoma. A letter to Julia which is still in existence describes his predicament vividly. The first part is a love letter to his young wife which he did not intend to be seen by the rest of the family. He might have been embarrassed had he known that it would be read by his descendants a century later.

The remainder of the letter details his frustration at digging a well through solid rock and his excitement at witnessing a near "shooting scrape" arising out of a dispute regarding some hay. Otherwise the news is mundane and the instructions practical. The letter was dated Sunday, August 5, 1894, and it was postmarked at Tulsa. It read:

Dear Julia, As I can't pass the day with you I will do the next best thing and write you a good long letter How I long to have you and our little one with me. While I am hard at work of course I don't think so much about it, but when night comes and on Sunday I feel so homesick that it just seems like the time for us to see each other never will come; but Julia I must not complain for I have a patient loving little wife that is almost heart broken who has not uttered

one word of complaint but has tried to be cheerful and not discourage anyone by complaining. Am I not right? And Julia if I did not see the evidence of your loving kindness and consideration I would be one of the most miserable of men for Julia you are the same to me as you was when we were married except you are a great deal dearer to me now than then.. I have often thought after finishing a letter and sending it to you that you would think it cold or that I wanted to see little Ray more than you, but you understood me didn't you. I guess you would not feel jealous of me for loving our little boy. I know I have made very many mistakes and have been a poor manager but Julia if a mans strong love can atone for such mistakes you surely have the atonement. I see no pleasure here without wishing you here to share it with me. I feel sorry for you having to pack and get ready to move and come down here alone and how I would like to be there to come along with you, I believe you would enjoy the trip.

(I hope you don't think I'm silly for writing this way do you if you do I will curb my feelings after this. This part is for Mama & Ray the other you can show to the folks. A kiss & lots of love from Papa to Mama and Ray.)

I went to a meeting one night last week about 3 miles from here. They had been holding meetings for a few nights. There was a house full, it was the M.E. church.

Well Julia I will try to tell you what I have been doing. I have not finished the well that I began as I have been delayed by different things. I had to blast about two out of 7 feet of slate and when I got through that struck solid rock and then we had to find a drill and while looking for one we saw an outfit in the field putting up the hay that we was to have. We went to see about it and found that Thornton had put them in there to make the hay for him and Frost ordered them to quit and they quit, had the hay almost down. Frost and Thornton had trouble over it almost a fight and shooting scrape. Frost would have seen it through had it not have been that he had no written contract with Thornton in regard to letting a man come on the place to put in fall wheat and if he pinched him, Thornton, about the hay he would get contrary and not let us come on the place to put in wheat, so Thornton said if I would settle with the men for putting the hay up we could have it and I did so. They finished putting it up for \$1.00 a ton. There will be 15 tons or more.

It is so dry that I can't do any plowing until it rains. We had a rain the 13th that raised Mingo 4 feet but it is too dry to plow. I will go to work at making the crossing below the railroad next week

Julia I would pack our cloths bedding and dishes just what we have to have to get along with this winter ready to ship and the rest of the things we may have to leave until I get money to pay freight on them unless they load a car Tell Will not to forget any of my harness. Uncle Frank & Denn Mayes are here looking for a place.

You must write and tell me if there is anything you want to know about moving. Will you have money enough to pay pasturing on the horses and bring you down here?

Walter Webb was fired from his job in Tulsa and left without paying the money he owed Will and also left a board bill of \$7.00. Don't know where he went.

Tell aunt Lucy to write and tell me how much land they can handle and I will try and find a place. Write and tell me what arrangements Will is going to make about moving so that I can answer before you start.

You asked me if you could go up to Trents & Pilnows visiting. Of course you can go if you have time. You know that I like to have you enjoy yourself all you can. Do you suppose poor old

Rover could stand the trip down here? He would be lots of help to you. Where is his leg taken off and what do you suppose did it?

F

That fall Julia drove a covered wagon with a second trailing wagon on a 500-mile trek over the prairie from Sutherland, Nebraska, to near Tulsa, Indian Territory. In the wagons were her year old baby Ray and all the family belongings.¹⁵ Rover, the faithful three-legged family dog, hobbled alongside, hitching a ride at intervals.

The couple were reunited at the new homestead near Sand Springs. The well whose creation had been the source of such frustration for Francis was completed, but unfortunately the water was so contaminated by "rock oil" that it was hardly usable for drinking. (development of the Red Fork Oil Field near Tulsa began only seven years later in 1901)¹⁶

Francis farmed near Sand Springs for less than four years. During this time a daughter was born on February 24, 1896. They named her Ila Alverda. Shortly after her birth they moved many miles westward to a farm near the crossroads hamlet of Walthall, Oklahoma, a post office and grocery store on Indian Creek named for its founder, Mr. Walter Hall.²⁵ At Walthall the well water was at least fit to drink. By regarding the oil in the well on the Sand Springs homestead as a nuisance rather than a rare opportunity Francis had missed the greatest financial windfall of his life. The commercial oil field developed there soon after he left might have made him a wealthy man had he achieved and retained title to the land and its mineral rights.

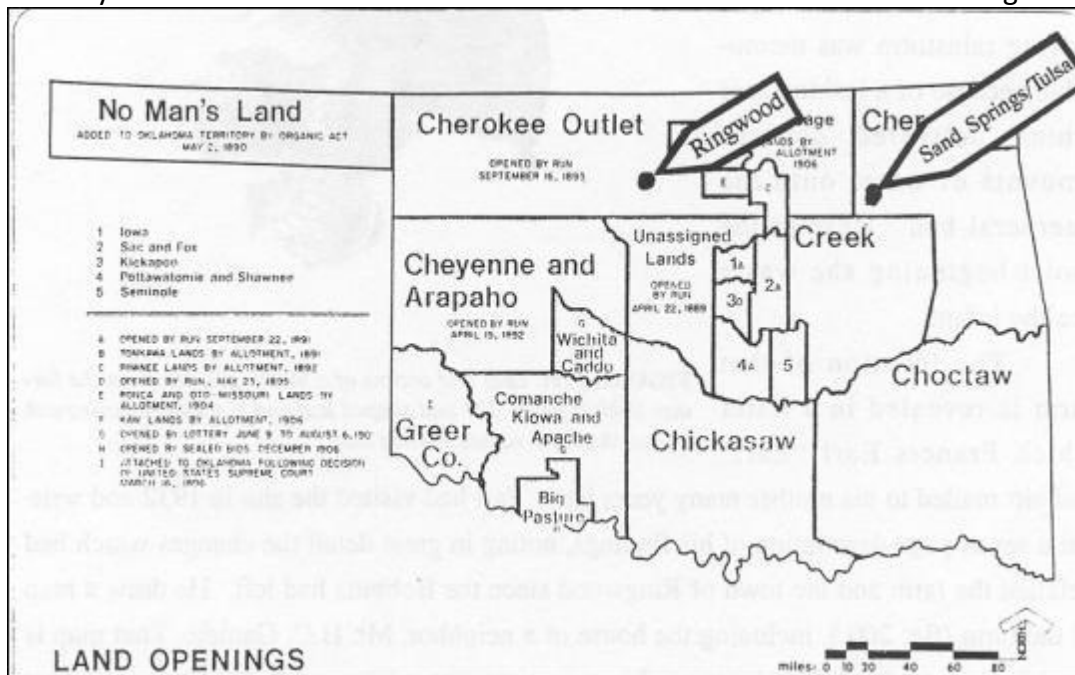


FIGURE 198: It was Indian Territory when the Bobbitts lived there. Ok-lahoma did not become a state until 1907.

The new farm near Walthall included wheat fields toward its west side and stands of black jack oak on the east.²³ The dense forest of black jack or scrub oak provided building material, fuel for cooking and heating, and, when harvested and hauled to Enid,

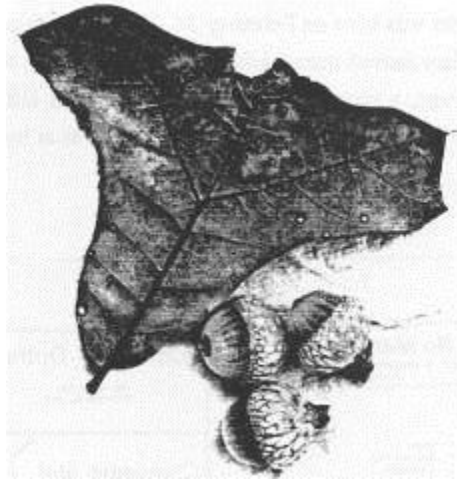


FIGURE 199: Leaf and acorns of a blackjack oak- from the former Bobbitt farm. The odd shaped leaf and black bark distinguish it from the more valuable white oak.

a source of cash income.²⁵ Francis and Julia set about making improvements, and during this time, on February 12, 1898, their son Francis Earl was born. Two years later Hazel Jessie was born on June 29, 1900, while the definitive frame house was under construction. Her birth during a driving rainstorm was memorable because of a leaking roof which delivered copious amounts of water onto the puerperal bed. Despite the moist beginning she was a healthy infant.

The location of that farm is revealed in a letter which Francis Earl "Earl" Bobbitt mailed to his mother many years later. Earl had visited the site in 1932 and written a seven page description of his findings, noting in great detail the changes which had befallen the farm and the town of Ringwood since the Bobbitts had left. He drew a map of the farm (fig. 200), including the house of a neighbor, Mr. H.C. Gauley. That map is now the key to the farm's location, for even sixty years later every Ringwood resident still knows the old H. C. Gauley place.^{23,27}

The legal description of the former Bobbitt farm is SW 1/4, Sec. 35, Township 22, Range 10, Major County, Oklahoma. Its location relative to Ringwood and Walthall is shown on an earlier official map. (fig. 201). There are no longer any buildings on the property, but the lay of the land, including the dense growth of black jack oak, is still as Earl drew it in 1932.²⁷

Earl noted in his 1932 letter that "Lloyd Hays got the place from Papa and sold it to H. C. Gauley a year after we left." Records at the court house, Fairview, Oklahoma, 26 show that Lloyd B. Hays received title to the property directly from the United States

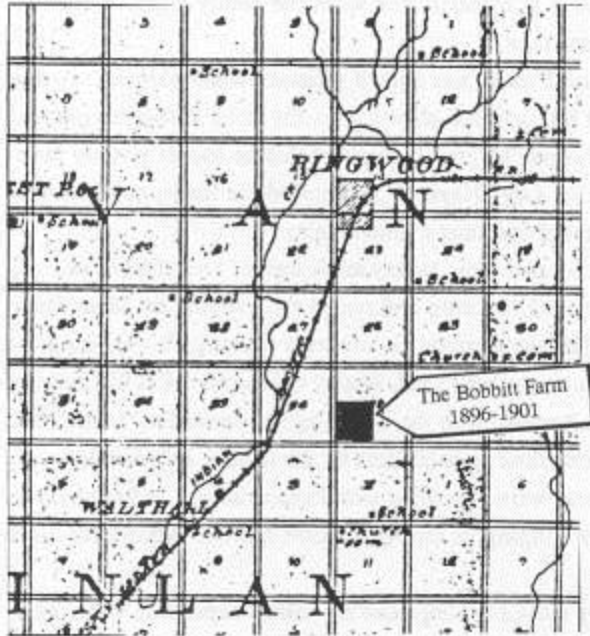


FIGURE 201: Detail from an early map of Major County, Oklahoma, showing the location of the Bobbitt farm relative to the villages of Ringwood and Walthall.

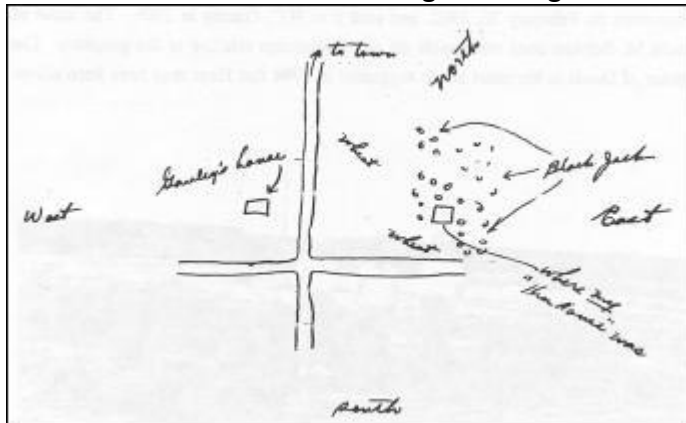


FIGURE 200: F. Earl Bobbitt drew this nwp in 1932 when he revisited the Oklahoma farm where he was born

Government on February 26, 1902, and sold it to H. C. Gauley in 1908. The name of Francis M. Bobbitt does not appear on any documents relating to the property. The Register of Deeds at the court house suggested in 1994 that Hays may have been allowing the Bobbitts to live on the quarter section, perhaps even paying them to do so, as this was a common practice in the days of homesteading when one family might be attempting to obtain title to more than one farm.

28

Shortly after Hazel's birth Francis was injured seriously while plowing. A run- away team of horses dragged him and his plow across the field, inflicting internal injuries and a severe hernia. He was so gravely disabled that he had to give up farm- ing.^{10,17} He returned the farm to Loyd Hays, ²³ and moved the family to the nearby town of Ringwood with the intent of operating a general store.

Ringwood was a village located about twenty miles west of Enid, Oklahoma, still Indian Territory. Francis purchased the store and rented the building on Main Street where he could offer for sale a full line of groceries, women's wear, men's wear and farm supplies on the ground floor. He employed a local, Wesley Cline, to work as his assistant at the store. 23 Upstairs was a hostelry with the imposing but misleading name, "The Palace Hotel." Also on the second floor were quarters for the family. Ila's earliest recollections of that living arrangement were of playing with Indian children and of cowboys shooting wildly, a bullet even lodging in the wall above her bed behind the store counter.^{11,14}



FIGURE 202: L to R, Jack, Don and Warren Kump stand on the Bobbitt Farm south of Ringwood in November 1994.





FIGURE 203: The Bobbitt general store at Ringwood, Indian Territory. Upstairs were the hotel and living quarters for the family. Near the center of the picture is Julia holding baby Hazel. To her left are the children Ila, Earl and Ray, then husband Francis.

In 1901 when the family moved to Ringwood the town's population was slightly more than 300. There were four grocery stores, two hardware stores, three livery stables and feed lots, one bank, seven pool rooms (!), one meat market and one barber shop. That year the Enid and Anadarko Railroad reached the community, bringing promise of more business, a cash market for locally grown farm commodities and a passenger service. The railroad extended from Enid to Ringwood, then south to Walthall and on to Lawton. Soon after its completion it became a branch line of the Rock Island system.²⁵

Either shop keeping was not to Francis' liking or his hernia had become less troublesome, for by 1903 he was turning his thoughts to farming once again. His older brother Willis had married Mary Ellen "Ella" Feaster at Hebron, Nebraska, on February 25, 1885, and the couple were moving to Decatur County, Kansas, where Ella's brother, Aaron Nathan Feaster, was living in Bassetville Township.¹⁸ On September 7, 1903, Francis purchased a 320 acre farm in that same Decatur County, Kansas. It was located two miles south of Oberlin in Center Township, the legal description being N 1/2, sec. 19, Township 3, Range 28 West of the 6th RM. Francis paid \$2700 for the farm and assumed a \$500 mortgage; the deed was delivered on March 1, 1904. The house and outbuildings were located on the northwest corner of the farm. On September 25, 1905, Francis sold the west half of the farm to his brother Willis.¹⁹ Willis and Ella lived on that farm for the remainder of their lives.

Meanwhile back in Oklahoma Francis was attempting to trade his store for a farm. He wrote a letter on March 17, 1904, which has been preserved (Fig. 206). Note that Julia's name was included on the letterhead, an unusual gesture at that time when most men considered the woman's place to be the home.

Apparently the inquiry of Mr. Holland came to naught, for Francis decided soon thereafter to move the family to Decatur County, Kansas, where he had already purchased a farm. He sold as much of his Ringwood property as he could and shipped the remaining merchandise by rail to Dresden, Decatur County, Kansas, via the Rock Island Road. The family lived in Dresden for

two months while Francis was selling the left- over store goods to Mr. Lance Alexander of that small town. They then moved to Oberlin, arriving on June 6, 1904, where they rented a house on Griffith Avenue near the north edge of town and owned by a Mr. Vale. They later moved to a rented house at 309 West Commercial Street just west of the later location of the Methodist church. In that house the last addition to the family, Margaret Ellen Bobbitt, was bom on June 15, 1905.

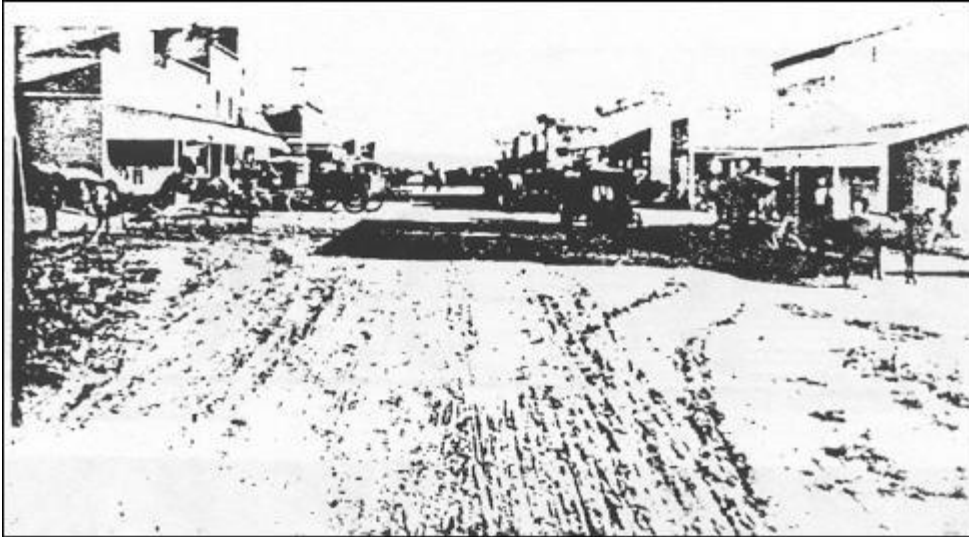


FIGURE 204: Main Street, Ringwood, Indian Territory, 1901.

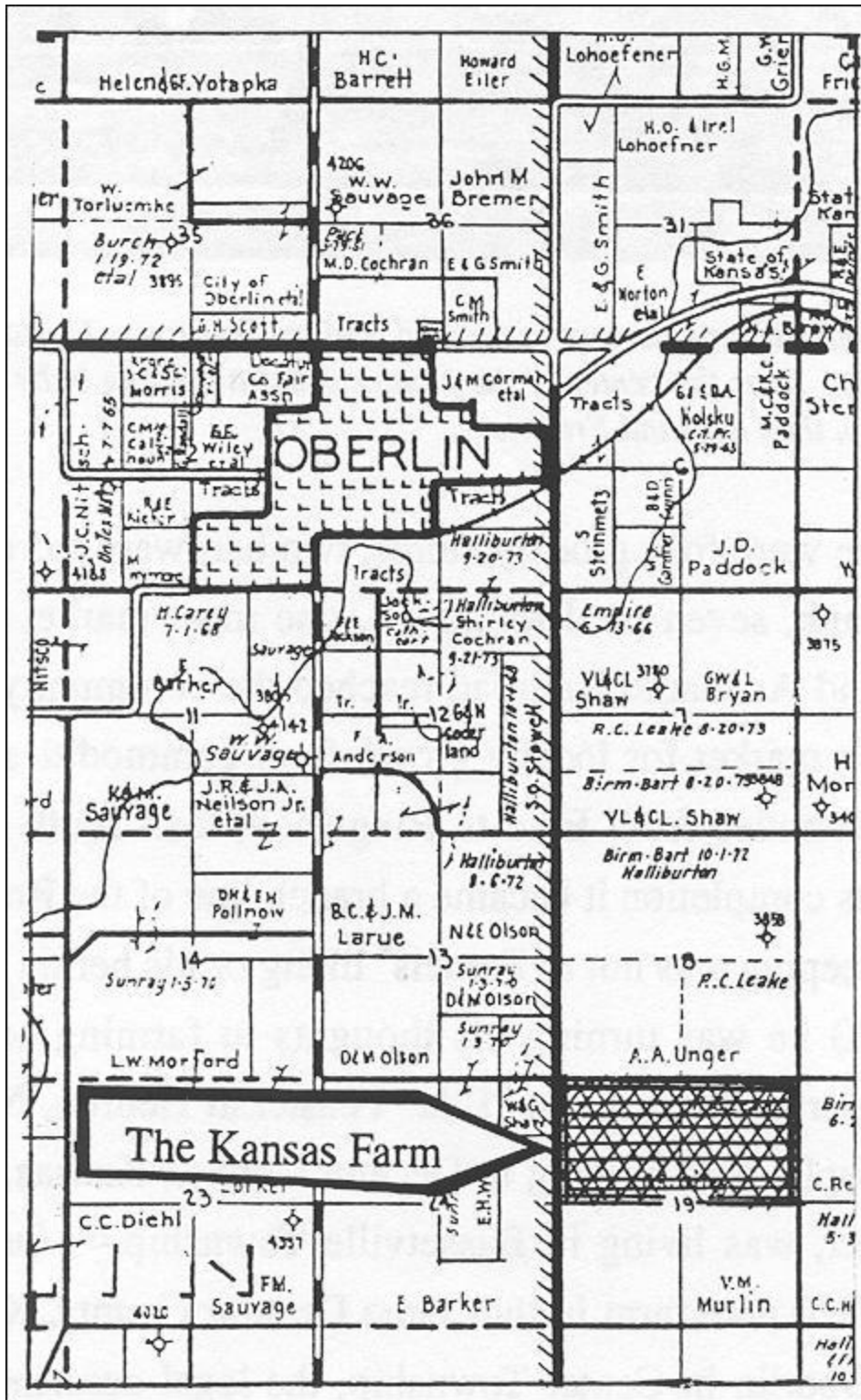


FIGURE 205: The 320 acre farm two miles south of Oberlin, Kansas.

F. M. Bobbitt

F. M. Bobbitt

F. M. Bobbitt & Company,

Department Store.

Ringwood, Okla., March 17 1904

Mr. Holland. On glancing of the
Oklahoman I noticed your ad offering
to trade a farm for a Merchandise bus-
iness I thought I would write and get a
description of your land and price on
same as I have a stock of goods and
good building that I will trade for
farm land Give me description of
land and improvements and price
on leased land and have separate I am
located 20 miles west of Eardle at
Ringwood on a direct line to Lawton
let me hear from you by return
mail

Respy
F. M. Bobbitt

FIGURE 206: This sample of Francis Bobbitt's handwriting on his imposing stationery indicates that he was still trying to exchange his store for farm land, even after he had purchased the Decatur County, Kansas, farm.

Francis supported himself and his family by working as a carpenter, one of his major projects being a house constructed on the Chris Mines farm northwest of town.²⁰ When on September 25, 1905, he sold half of the farm in Center Township to his brother Willis⁹ he used the proceeds a week later to purchase eight lots on West Hall Street in Oberlin. He paid \$600 in cash and signed a mortgage for another \$600. The legal description of the property was lots 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Block 19, Summit Addition to Oberlin.²⁰ Included on the lot next to the Chautauqua Park was a small house at 709 West Hall Street where the family then moved." In addition to his activity as a carpenter Francis engaged in various other projects - and enterprises. He bought a half interest in a creamery and butter plant in southwest Oberlin in partnership with Jim Burchett. He raised livestock in partnership with his brother Willis, and up to the time of his death he was raising hogs in partnership with Chris Mines. He loved horses. In a pen behind the house in west Oberlin he kept four pet colts, Maudie, Nellie, Tommy and Johnny. ¹⁰

Francis was a joyous man who lived a simple happy life surrounded by his family in that little house by the park. He was a natural musician and owned a number of instru- ments which he played for the enjoyment of his children. One child would stand behind him holding a harmonica to his lips while he played the old pedal organ. He also owned and played a comet, a

violin and a curious stringed instrument called a clavichord. He even owned a bass drum which was eventually given to the Oberlin City Band.^{14,20} Soon after the move to the house by the park he began constructing a new home for the family. He built it on one of the lots he had acquired on West Hall Street and near the house where the family was living at the time. The address was 705 West Hall Street. He worked on the new house when not otherwise engaged as a carpenter.



FIGURE 207: Francis Bobbitt built the new house at 705 West Hall Street for his family. (Ray Bobbitts to left)

By the spring of 1906 the new house was nearly completed. It had been a cold wet season, and he had taken a cold which would not relent.²⁰ Since frequent ear infections in childhood he had continued to have drainage from his ear as an adult. There had never been much pain associated with the drainage, but now some tenderness developed behind his ear, and he began to feel feverish. His condition worsened in spite of the best efforts of local doctors. He suffered from severe headaches and a stiff neck and finally journeyed all the way to Topeka by rail to consult the doctors at Christ's Hospital (now Stormont-Vail). In those days before antibiotics or the means to make an accurate diagnosis there was little to be done. For four more weeks at the hospital his condition continued to deteriorate,- and on Sunday morning, June 3, 1906, he died. An autopsy revealed a massive brain abscess which was a complication of chronic mastoiditis. This condition is a rarity in the late Twentieth Century, because antibiotic therapy for childhood middle ear infections prevents the development of mastoiditis, but in those days it was all too common.

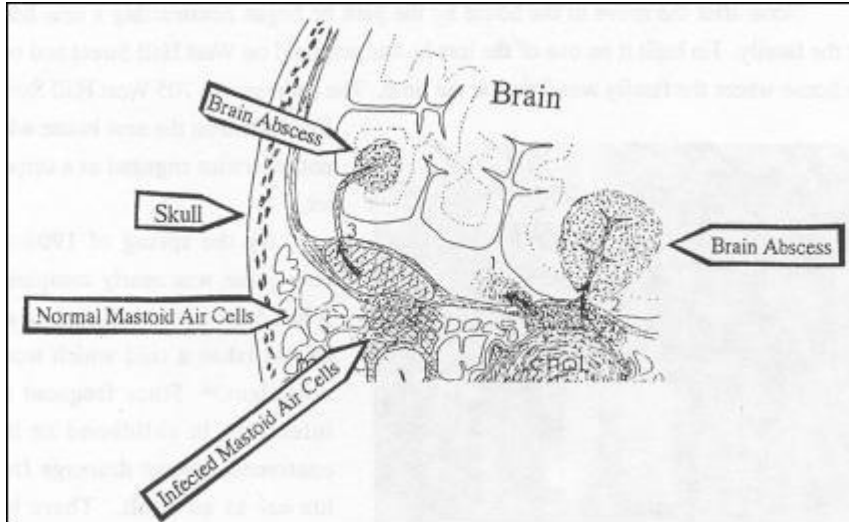


FIGURE 208: Infection from mastoid air cells can invade the cerebro spinal fluid and produce meningitis as at 1, or invade the brain directly, forming a brain abscess as at 2, or enter the brain via a blood vessel as at 3. Francis Bobbitt's brain abscess probably formed by direct extension as shown at 2.

His body was returned to Oberlin where it lay briefly in its coffin at the family's little house by the park.¹⁰ Friends came there to offer condolences, and on Tuesday, June 5, Reverend Henry conducted the funeral at the Christian church. An obituary printed in the Oberlin Herald was as follows:

"Francis Marion Bobbitt was born in the state of Illinois in the year 1868, came with the family to Richardson County, Nebraska, in 1879, was married to Miss Julia L Comstock in 1890, and died at Topeka, Kansas, Sunday morning, June 3, 1906, at 10 o'clock. Seven children were born to this union of which five are living; who with the mother are left to mourn the loss of a kind husband and father. Some two months ago he was taken with a pain in his head, he gradually grew worse until about four weeks since he was taken to Christ's hospital at Topeka. The doctors there admitted they did not know what was the matter. He gradually grew weaker until Sunday morning when he died. A post-mortem examination revealed a sack of pus at the base of the brain as large as an orange and it was necessarily a fatal ailment from the first. The family have the sympathy of the entire community. He was an excellent citizen and a kind parent. The funeral was at the Christian church in this city Tuesday, June 5th, Rev. Henry preaching the sermon. The Woodmen Lodge of Oberlin, had charge of arrangements and attended in a body. He was insured for \$1000 in that lodge. Interment in the Oberlin cemetery.

His death at age 38 was a calamity for the young wife and the five children, Ray age 12, Ila age 10, Francis Earl age 8, Hazel age 6, and Margaret not yet a year old. The emotional impact of the loss was staggering, but the little family's subsequent struggle to survive in those days before help was available from social agencies and a community safety net forms the basis for another story.

Summing Up

A few conclusions can be drawn regarding eight generations of Bobbitts. A coat of arms dating from 1250 AD, if authentic, suggests some prominence in the past, but the record of the direct line from William Bobbitt of Wales to Francis Marion Bobbitt is replete with just plain folks. All eight were farmers, as were most Americans prior to the Twentieth Century. In addition John William Bobbitt (1832-1909) worked as an independent trader in livestock, and Francis Marion Bobbitt (1868-1906) tried his luck at retailing and later at carpentry.

Most of the men were of modest means. The wealthiest was John Richard Bobbitt (1725-1791) whose material success was based on slave labor, while at the other extreme was John William Bobbitt (1832-1909) who was characterized by a contemporary newspaper as an honest man who would never admit that he was "down and out".

Like most Americans of their day the Bobbitts were highly mobile, moving in the course of their lives far from the places of their births. Usually they moved westward, but always in search of opportunity. Isham Bobbitt (1754-1836) was a key figure, because he moved this branch of the family north of the Mason-Dixon Line. Most other branches of the Bobbitt clan reside in the South to the present day.

The Welsh Bobbitts belonged to the Established Church of England, but by the early 1800's the Bobbitts were staunch Baptists. Several siblings, although none in the direct line, were ordained Baptist ministers. Francis Marion Bobbitt joined the Church of Christ after moving to Oberlin. All eight Bobbitt men married, and most had the large families typical of their day. If there was marital discord, it has not been recorded. As in nearly all genealogical studies the wives and mothers are faceless and unfairly overlooked, but as contributors of DNA and as molders of the children they were at least as important as the men.

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21. Obituary of Julia (Hoyt) Bobbitt
22. Letter to Hazel (Bobbitt) Kump from Dr. J.T. Waggener dated November 18, 1974
23. Letter to Julia (Comstock) Bobbitt from her son Francis Earl Bobbin dated May 2, 1932. He was married and living in St. Louis, Missouri, at the time, but had just spent a weekend visiting Ringwood and the farm where he had been born.
24. Jack R. Kump found the details of the Lincoln County farm at the North Platte court house in September, 1994.
25. Gloss Mountain Country, A History of Major County, Produced by the Major County Historical Society, Fairview Oklahoma. 1977
26. Documents in the office of the Register of Deeds, Major County Courthouse, Fairview, Oklahoma
27. Warren, Don and Jack Kump visited the site of the farm, the town of Ringwood and the court house at Fairview, Oklahoma, in November, 1994.
28. Rena Hays Rush, daughter of Loyd Hays, wrote in Gloss Mountain Country, A History of Major County that the Hays family lived on this property from 1893 to 1904. The discrepancy is difficult to explain. Mrs. Rush was considerably younger than Earl Bobbitt and may have been mistaken about the dates.

All other information included in this chapter entitled "The Bobbitts" is from Bobbitt, John W., The Bobbitt Family in America. Privately published at 2475 Virginia Avenue, NW., Washington, DC. 20037. 1985

Marriages or the Children of John William and Julia (Hoyt) Bobbitt

John Seymour Bobbitt	m. Clara	
Cornelia Olive Bobbitt	m. Herman Shier	
James Clarence Bobbitt	m. Margaret Shanklin	Feb. 23, 1882
Willis R. Bobbitt	m. Mary Ellen "Ella" Feaster	Feb. 25, 1885
Francis Marion Bobbitt	m. Julia Lucy Comstock	Mar. 20, 1890
Jessie Julia Bobbitt	m. Emery Loudon	
Allen Eugene "Gene" Bobbitt	m. Ella	1893
Sarah Elenor Bobbitt	m. (1) Oliver Ergenbright	
	(2) Bud Seitz	

Date of Deaths and Places of Burial

John Seymour Bobbitt	d.	Buried Colorado
Cornelia Olive Shier	d. Mar. 11, 1932	Buried Dawson, Nebraska
James Clarence Bobbitt	d. Jun. 2, 1929	Buried Beaver, Oklahoma
Willis R. Bobbitt	d. July, 1948	Buried Oberlin, Kansas
Sarah Elinor Seitz	d. July 12, 1952	Buried Cortez, Colorado
Francis Marion Bobbitt	d. Jun. 3. 1906	Buried Oberlin, Kansas
Jessie Julia Loudon	d. Nov. 15, 1951	Buried Stapleton Nebraska
Allen Eugene Bobbitt	d. Dec. 25, 1963	Buried Denver, Colorado