John H. Robinson A Pioneer Austin Family 1815 - 2010

Ann Johnston Dolce



To Mary Jo Butler Cooper (1912-2010) She taught generations to appreciate and preserve family history and Austin buildings.



Robinson – Macken House Home of John H. and Elizabeth Robinson 702 Rio Grande, Austin, Texas



A view of the city at the time of the arrival of J. H. Robinson Note the capitol building in upper right corner.

Introduction

John Hermy Robinson Sr. was not a typical emigrant to the United States. He did not come fleeing religious persecution, famine, or war. He was not part of a land grant movement. He came because of business; he stayed because of love, a love he met in New Orleans, Louisiana. He moved his family from New Orleans to find financial success and safety, settling first in Little Rock, Arkansas and then in Austin, Texas. Both cities were state capitals situated in beautiful surroundings and experiencing periods of growth and vitality. Robinson's is a story of a merchant who became an integral part of a community, setting down deep roots and friendships that spanned generations.

This document represents the efforts of the descendents of John H. Robinson to gather and compile the history of the Robinson family in Austin, Texas. The text undoubtedly contains errors and incorrect information as well as missing information. In some cases when contradictory information has been obtained both sources of information are noted. The most recent generations of the Robinson family are presented with only basic historical facts. It is hoped that someday their grand accomplishments will be added to this record.

Significant contributions to the Robinson research were made by Carla Robinson Allen, Robert Grayum Baker Jr., Austin Swancoat Barber, Suzanne Robinson Bishop, Jama Overstreet Brown, J. Lawrence Buell IV, Sandy Smith Buell, Janne Anderson Burgio, Kelly Butler, Marguerite Walling Butler, Charlotte Carothers, Marsha Caven, Mary Jo Butler Cooper, Manning Robinson Day, Beth Peninger Beran Duke, George Anne Robinson Elmore, Sue Hartnett Gathman, Richard Gerhard, Martha Cooper Golden, Diana Butler Gribble, Peggy Peninger Hartnett, Kaki Peninger Hayden, Kathryn Hayden, Nobie Bremond Hendricks, Kay Butler Howell, Mark Hurd, Missy Miller Jackson, Carolyn Hartnett Jarchow, Virginia Schneider Johnston, Alan Jones, Lucinda Cruse Marinis, Madelaine Umstattd Morris, Ann Robinson Musgrave, McKay Brown Nutt, Carol Matz Owen, Paulette Plate Pearson, Alfred Robinson IV, Brad Robinson, Christopher Carr Robinson, George Robinson III, Laura Conner Robinson, Richard Coad Robinson, James H. Rogers, Becky Butler Scott, William Patrick Scott III, Scott Sibley, Eleanor Buell Stephenson, Susan Howell Templeton, Richard B. Turbiville, Tom Bloss Turbiville, Patricia Robinson Tyler, Alycia Smith Wootton, Ginger Umstattd, and Jeanne Smith Umstattd. Special thanks must be given to the staff of the Austin History Center for their expertise, patience, and amazing resources. Leonard Dolce provided support, sustenance and understanding. Beth Beran Duke was the ever faithful and encouraging editor without whom this "tome" would not have been finished.

Two John H. Robinsons

In addition to John Hermy Robinson Sr., the patriarch of the family and focus of this history, there was another John H. Robinson who arrived in Austin at the same time but this second Robinson came from New York and was 10 years younger than John Hermy Robinson Sr. It is often difficult and puzzling to distinguish between the two men since they both referred to themselves as John H. Robinson, but a cash ledger and several letters that definitely belonged to John Hermy Robinson Sr. have provided clues to help solve the puzzle. Other clues were found in newspaper articles and records from Queensberry County and Washington County historians in the state of New York. Since the second John H. Robinson has been such a major part of the genealogical research, it is only proper that his story be told as well.

The un-related John H. Robinson was born in 1827 in Fort Edward, New York and died 19 Aug 1909 in Glen Falls, New York. His obituary states, "John H. Robinson of Austin, Texas died at 12:30 this morning at his Cleverdale Cottage, aged 82 years."1 This John H. Robinson was the son of James H. Robinson (1792-1862) and Maria Linendoll (1800-1881). The couple had ten children: George E. (1814-1889), Caroline (1822-1824), John H. (1827-1909), Francis Jane (1829-1924), Mary Eveline (1832-1900), Ann M. (1833-), Albert J. (1833-1870), William D. (1837-1904), Emily W. (1840-), Catherine E. (1844-). George E. Robinson and his brother John H. Robinson left New York and moved to Texas in the 1850s. Deed records place George E. Robinson in Texas in 1854 when he purchased property in the name of the two brothers. The first record of a business transaction in Travis County, Texas is dated 15 Oct 1854 when George E. Robinson purchased property from William W. Schrier.² Only George's name was on this deed, but on 10 Feb 1855, George corrected the deed and stated that "now it be known that although said deed [of 15 Oct 1854] was made to me individually, yet the said deed is jointly owned by my Brother, J.H. Robinson, the same being the partnership property of the firm of G.E. & J.H. Robinson."³ This first recorded purchase in Travis County was for 320 acres near to and east of Pecan Bayou, part of the Upper Colorado River Basin near Jim Ned Creek close to Brownwood, Texas and the current-day Lake Brownwood.⁴ This area was part of Travis County in the 1850s.

G.E. and J.H. Robinson are listed together in the 1855 Tax Rolls of Travis County. The assessment shows them owning 1320 acres with a value of \$660; one horse valued at \$150; merchandise on hand of \$200; and 2 watches valued at \$200. They paid a poll tax of \$2, a state tax of \$2.52 and a county tax of \$1.61.⁵

The brothers purchased additional property and opened Robinson's Exchange or Robinson's Billiard Saloon on Congress Avenue. In Oct 1855 George sold his interest in the billiard saloon to John H. in exchange for money and a job at the saloon for the length of the lease on the building.⁶ George E. Robinson disappeared from the Austin scene and no mention of him has been found in Travis County following 1860.



In 1862, John H. joined the Confederate army as a captain in Company C of the 33rd Regiment of the Texas Cavalry, also known as Duff's Partisan Corps of Mounted Volunteers. He enrolled 15 Sep 1862 and was mustered into service 22 Nov 1862 in Austin, Texas. He held the rank of major when the war ended.⁷

Introduction

Following the war, in 1866 Robinson and Phillip W. Jobe operated Jobe & Robinson, a drinking saloon on Congress Avenue. On 4 Feb 1866 the saloon burned and was smashed when the walls fell in.⁸

	Ha Ine Cavaly Force
-	No
•	I, the undersigned, Prisoner of War, belonging to the Army of the Trans-Mississippi Department, having been surrendered
-	by General E. Kirby Smith, C. S. A., Commanding said Department, to Major General E. R. S. Canby, U. S. A., Commanding
	Army and Division of West Mississippi, do hereby give my solemn PAROLE OF HONOR, that I will not hereafter serve in the
	Armies of the Confederate States, or in any military capacity whatever, against the United States of America, or render aid to
	the enemies of the latter, until properly exchanged in such menner as shall be mutually approved by the respective authorities.
	Residence austin Juras 1.1 40.1
	Residence autorities. Residence autorities. Down at autorities. Down
T.	Approved :
7	The above named officer will not be disturbed by the United States Apthorities, as long as he observes his parole, and the laws
	in force where he resides.
	Coff 19 - Maring Com. U. S. A. and Provosi Marshal Comment
	401 Parole of Honor 27 Jul 1865 Major John H. Robinson
•	

Robinson continued in the liquor and cigar business, and later in 1881 Robinson took on John Houghton as a partner. Robinson and Houghton had wines, liquors and cigars in their three-story brick building at the corner of 8th and Congress.9

In addition to his mercantile business, Robinson was a banker as was John Hermy Robinson Sr. The "New York" Robinson and John Houghton both served as directors of the American National Bank in Austin.¹⁰ The men dissolved their business partnership in 1906.¹¹ Robinson died in New York in 1909 and is buried in Union Cemetery, Ft. Edward with his parents and other members of his family.

It was difficult to determine which John H. Robinson did what. The letters and cash ledgers left by John Hermy Robinson Sr. provided one important key; newspaper articles of the period another; and records of the historians of Queensbury and Washington counties in New York another. The ledger and letters of John Hermy Robinson Sr. have a definite flowery and poetic writing style. The writings of the John H. Robinson who served in the civil war were straightforward and factual. Both men were excellent record keepers and their signatures were similar, though John Hermy's had more flourish to it.

Two newspaper articles, one about the election of Austin's fire chief in 1870¹² and one that announced the closing of Houghton & Robinson in 1906¹³ referred to "Major" Robinson. These articles tied the Major of the 33rd Regiment to these events. A third article reporting the death in 1909 in Glen Falls, NY of Austin pioneer, John H. Robinson¹⁴ could not have referred to John Hermy Robinson Sr. who died in 1897. The fourth and final newspaper article that helped solve the puzzle was John H. Robinson's obituary in 1909 giving his burial location and the name of a relative.¹⁵ From the cemetery and other county records in New York, parent and sibling names were discovered. The final puzzle piece was the fact that John H. Robinson had a brother George E. Robinson.¹⁶ This tied in with the deed records in Travis County and fit all the pieces of the puzzle together. There indeed were two pioneer John H. Robinsons who were contemporaries in Austin, Texas.

John Hermy Robinson Family Tree
<u>Generations 1 - 3</u>

John Hermy Robinson (1815-1897)—— m.Elizabeth Sheridan (1817-1902)		Charlotte Robinson (1870-1870) William Herme Robinson (1873-1957)
	— John Henry Robinson Jr. (1839-1934)– m. Madelaine Bremond (1846-1923)	Edward Robinson (1874-1928) m. Louise Villiers Hamby (1877-1953) Henry Robinson (1876-1945) Madelaine Robinson (1877-1961) m. Robert Wheless Shipp (1878-1951) Mary Robinson (1878-1962)
	— Mary Amelia Robinson (1842-1872)— m. Eugene Bremond (1832-1910)	Elizabeth Bremond (1862-1876) Walter Bremond (1864-1925) m. Mary Anderson (1866-1951) Lily Bremond (1867-1927) m. Ralph H. Steiner (1859-1926) Eugene Bremond Jr. (1870-1948)
	—Alfred Henry Robinson (1844-1885)— m. Pauline Bremond (1849-1935)	Elizabeth R. Robinson (1869-1915) m. Horace Paul Haldeman (1861-1905) John Alfred Robinson (1871-1891) Mary P. Robinson (1872-1934) m. Joseph A. Martin (1867-1947) Catherine A. Robinson (1873-1961) Alfred Henry Robinson Sr. (1877-1934) m. Florence Walsh (1878-1976) Pauline Robinson (1881-1971) m. Leonard John Schneider (1882-1940) Josephine C. Robinson (1885-1918) m. Thomas James Butler (1885-1973)
	— Elizabeth Robinson (1847-1920) m. Richard Jones Swancoat (1831-1911)	Mary Eugene Swancoat (1873-1873) Paul Emis (Emir) Swancoat (1874-1943) m. Hettie Smith (1885-1938) Nettie Bissell Swancoat (1876-1967) m. Lloyd Coleman Young (1874-1946) Zella Gillean Swancoat (1879-1959) m. Joseph Lawrence Buell (1871-1960) Austin Robinson Swancoat (1880-1916) m. Mattie Bob Kyle (1881-1966) Walter Bremond Swancoat (1883-1952) m. unknown
	—Lillian H. Robinson (1849-1867) —Alonzo Robinson (1852-1936) m. Laura Watson (1853-1915)	Oscar Alonzo Robinson (1878-1965) m. Floy Beckham (1883-1970) Ethel Robinson (1882-1959) m. Clinton Giddings Brown (1882-1964) m. Charles Scott Venable (1877-1961) Ralph Watson Robinson (1886-1978) m. Esther Woodward (1890-1970) m. Helen Moore Waggoner (1900-1971)
	—Austin Mortimer Robinson (1856-1912) m. Lida Tibbs (1865-1947)	Louise F. Robinson (b. 1889) m. George Troupe Watts (1884-1943) Stanley T. Robinson (1891-1964) m. Helen Wadsworth (1896-1981)
	— Laura Ada Robinson (1859-1946) m. James D. Sheeks (1855-1894)	——Greek Sheeks (1882-1894)
	Eugene Bremond Robinson (1862-1943 m. Gertrude Swearingen (1868-1905) m. Eva Hope Anderson (1879-1945)	9) — Jeanne Robinson (1888-1974) m. Herman F. Gerhard (1885-1961) — Richard S. Robinson (1892-1926) m. Mary Lucinda Peacock (1892-1944) — Eleanor Robinson (1899-1932) m. Augustus Grayum Baker (1899-1976) m. Charles John Palmer (1889-1954) — Eugene B. Robinson Jr. (1903-1950) m. Ruth Wilkins