

Mary Elizabeth Holmes
(1 Sep 1846–5 Jul 1927)

of

Butler County, Alabama & Milam County, Texas

Granddaughter of [Addison Scarborough](#),
Wives of John N. Staggers & Ansels Orlando Williamson

by Timothy Dean Hudson

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Contents

I. Early Life in Butler County, Alabama..... 2

II. Immigration to Milam County, Texas 6

III. Children of Mary Elizabeth Holmes..... 8

IV. Biographical Sketches of the Children of Mary Elizabeth Holmes

 1. Cynthia Viola Staggers Chandler 9

 2. Hillary R. Staggers..... 10

 3. Frances Elizabeth Staggers Bonds..... 10

 4. Howard Ross Williamson..... 11

V. Notes 12

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Early Life in Butler County, Alabama

Mary Elizabeth Holmes [Lizza] (1 Sep 1846–5 Jul 1927) received a full share of the estate [Addison Scarborough](#) (c1780–1868) equal with his children when his administrator handled his estate between 1874 and 1876 [1]. As a young fourteen-year-old girl, she lived in his 1860 Butler County household, along with his unmarried daughter, Nancy M. Scarborough. Mary was born too late to have been Addison's daughter, so she must have been his granddaughter, the only child of one of his two daughters born between 1810 and 1820 who must have married a Mr. Holmes. No identifying information is known of Mary's parents other than their surnames.

Neither Mary, her parents, Nancy, nor several of her uncles have been located on the 1850 federal census, so it is unclear if her parents both died soon after her birth or during the 1850s. Evidence indicates that Mary was raised by her grandfather and aunt, Addison and Nancy M. Scarborough, and Nancy lived with Mary's family in her later years. Clearly, Mary must have regarded Nancy as something of a surrogate mother.

Mary Elizabeth Holmes married on 13 December 1866 "*at Mr. Scarbor's*" in Butler County, Alabama to John N. Staggars [Jack] (c1845–1876/1880) [2], son of John H. Staggars (c1796–1859) and Margaret Elizabeth Roach (1818–1891). The Staggars had lived on the farm adjoining Addison Scarborough on his Duck Creek farm in 1850, and when he moved across the county to Pigeon Creek, they accompanied him, also purchasing a farm near Pigeon Creek.

John N. Staggars had enlisted as a private in Co. K, 17th Alabama Infantry Regiment at Montgomery, Alabama on 9 September 1861. It appears that he lied about his age, claiming that he was eighteen years old at his enlistment, when he was only about sixteen. He was present for duty in 1861 but captured at the surrender of Fort Donelson, Kentucky in February 1862. He was exchanged and returned to duty for 1863 and 1864, and sometime during this period he was promoted to corporal.

Staggars was captured at the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee on 17 December 1864 and arrived at the Military Prison at Louisville, Kentucky on 5 January 1865 as a prisoner of war. He arrived at Camp Chase, Ohio on January 11th and spent the remainder of the war incarcerated there. He was described as having dark eyes, height of 5' 6½", and aged nineteen years. He took the Oath of Allegiance to the United States at Camp Chase on 12 June 1865 and was presumably released soon afterwards [3].

Mary and Jack Staggars married at Addison Scarborough's house, and they probably moved in with him for the last two years of his life, with Jack cultivating the Scarborough farm. Mary and Jack continued to cultivate her grandfather's land for six years after his death. Like many Butler

County families, theirs was omitted by the enumerator of the 1870 federal census. In 1874, when Jonas W. Jones was appointed administrator of Addison Scarbrough's estate, he "*found that John N. Staggars in possession of the Land,*" upon which Jones "*immediately Rented to the said John N. Staggars the tillable lands belonging to the Estate*" for \$30 for the 1874 calendar year [4].

Between 1866 and 1874, Mary and Jack Staggars cultivated her grandfather's farm, often making mortgages for supplies advanced to them by merchants to carry them over until the harvest that fall. Poor harvests and low cotton prices plagued farmers across the Deep South during this period, and in hindsight, their series of mortgages appears a relentless battle against impending bankruptcy that ultimately drove them to follow her relatives to Texas in search of a better life for their family.

On 29 April 1868, John N. and Elizabeth M. Staggars signed a mortgage to Seth Mercer for \$54 to secure their payment of a promissory note they had signed the previous February 29th for that amount. They mortgaged to Mercer,

All of the Entire Crop raised upon the farm of the aforesaid J. N. Staggars & Elizabeth M. Staggars & a Sorrell made mule all in my possession in Butler County & State of Alabama.

The Staggars promised to pay the amount to Mercer by the next December 1st. They must have gathered enough cotton by September 7th to pay their bill to Mercer, for he signed a notation on the mortgage that day: "*This Mortgage is satisfied in full*" [5].

On 1 January 1872, Mary E. Staggars joined her husband, Jack, and his older brother, James Henry Staggars, a justice of the peace and Butler County Deputy Sheriff [6], and wife, Louretta, in mortgaging property to indemnify their debt of \$2000 to John T. McKinzie of Butler County. The Staggars brothers' note to McKinzie was due 15 January 1872, and to guarantee their repayment, they mortgaged,

1 Buggie, one yoke of Steers and two Bales cotton, one Gray mule 7 years old...,

as well as 137 acres of land. It is unclear whether this is land they inherited from their father or land they had jointly purchased [7].

Just two months later, on March 7th, Jack and his brother signed a promissory note to John T. McKinzie for \$255 due the following October 15th. They signed a mortgage to McKinzie to guarantee their repayment of this note, as well as another one to McKinzie dated January 1st for \$1500 due January 15th. These were extremely large sums of money for that era, and it seems unlikely that Jack and James Staggars would have owed him both \$2000 and \$1500, so perhaps one of the amounts was incorrect. To guarantee their payment of their debt to McKinzie, the Staggars brothers mortgaged

All the Corn and Cotton made or to be made by us on our farms, run and cultivated by us in Butler County, Alabama, for and during the year 1872.

The note for \$255 was for supplies advanced to the Staggers to enable them to raise their crops, but the purpose of the larger note was not stated [8].

Although in 1870, Mary's aunt, Nancy M. Scarborough, lived with Nancy's youngest sister, Mary E. Morgan, it appears that Nancy also continued to live on her father's old farm and participate in its cultivation. On 15 March 1873, Nancy and John N. Staggers signed a promissory note to a local mercantile firm:

On or before the 1st of October 1873, we promise to pay to the order of Seale & McGehee at Greenville, Alabama, the Sum of One Hundred & 00 Dollars for and in consideration of necessary provisions to the amount of value of said provisions this day advanced by said Seale & McGehee to us and by us bona fide received for the purpose of making a crop the present year, and without such advances it would not be in our power to proceed the necessary teams, provisions and farming implements to make a crop on our farm in Butler County Alabama. And it is hereby agreed and understood that this note is made to secure a lien on the Stock, as also the whole crop raised by us the present year, on said farm or elsewhere.

To secure their payment, they mortgaged this property to Seale & McGehee:

Three cows & calves, one Red, 2 Black & White sided, 2 cows Bck & White Sided, 1 two Horse wagon worth \$75 & all of our growing crop or to be grown the present year on our farm in Butler Co. that we now live on.

Nancy Scarborough and John N. Staggers had the promissory note and mortgage notarized and recorded on April 18th [9].

The following year, on 23 May 1874, John N. Staggers signed a promissory note to Steiner, McGehee, & Co., a mercantile firm in Greenville, for \$100, the value of "necessary Provisions...received for the purpose of making a crop the present year." To guarantee his payment, Staggers mortgaged this property to Steiner, McGehee, and & Co.:

One Gray horse about 8 years old named Charlie & one two horse wagon & one milch cow all owned by me, also the entire crop of every description now raising or may be raised by me on the farm I am now cultivating belong[ing] to Estate of A. Scarbrough [sic] in Butler Co.

Staggers agreed to pay his debt to Steiner, McGehee, & Co. on or before October 1st of that year [10]. That summer, on July 27th, the administrator of Addison Scarborough held an estate sale at his farm. John N. Staggers purchased the following items [11]:

1 Cow & calf	\$17.25
2 Hogs	6.25
1 Sow & 3 Shoats	2.50
1 Wagon	20.10
1 Loom.....	1.50
1 Reel.....	.10

1 Lot Cooking Utensils.....	.25
1 Horse Remus	46.50
1 Gray Horse Bob.....	16.00
2 Set Plow Gear	1.65

In the fall of 1874, Mary and Jack Stagers gathered their crops planted on her grandfather's old farm, and during the winter of 1874–1875, they emigrated from Alabama. The Stagers moved with their children and Mary's aunt, Nancy M. Scarborough, to Texas, joining Mary's uncles, Simeon R. and Matthew D. Scarborough, and aunt, Mary E. Scarborough Morgan, who had already settled in Texas. By 19 August 1875, the Stagers and Nancy Scarborough had established residence in the Lone Star State, although it is unclear if they spent their first year in Leon County with Mary's uncles, or joined her aunt, Mary E. Morgan, in Milam County [12].

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Immigration to Milam County, Texas

By 18 January 1876, Mary and Jack Staggers, and her aunt, Nancy M. Scarborough, had all established residence in Milam County. On that day, all three signed a power of attorney regarding their interest as heirs of Addison Scarborough:

Know all men by these presents, that I J. N. Staggers & Mary Staggers wife the said J. N. Staggers & Nancy Scarborough Citizens of said County of Milam have this day made nominated and appointed, by these presents do make, nominate and appoint, Shadrick Crawford of the County of Butler in the State of Alabama our true and lawful Agent and attorney in fact, for us and in our names, places and Stead to demand of and Receive from J. W. Jones as Administrator of the Estate of Addison Scarborough Deceased, all of the Right, title and interest be it money or property that the said Mary E. Staggers and the said Nancy Scarborough may have and be entitled to as Heirs at law of the said Addison Scarborough Deceased, hereby giving and granting into our said agent and attorney full power and authority to execute in our names places and Steads, all Receipts or other writings that may become necessary to be executed in the premises, in a word we delegate to our said Agent & attorney full power to execute in our names, all such writings that may be necessary to Relinquish all our interest in said Estate...

The justice of the peace examined all three, in particular, examining Mary E. Staggers apart from her husband, and she confirmed that she made the transaction of her own free will [1].

John N. Staggers died sometime between 18 January 1876 and 1880, when Mary E. Staggers lived as a widow with her children and aunt in Milam County. Mary earned a living by sharecropping, maintaining 20 acres of land in cultivation. Her farming implements and machinery were valued at \$10, with her livestock valued at \$100. Mary's 1879 farm production was valued at \$140, and her livestock on hand and crops produced in 1879 included:

1880 Milam County, Texas Federal Census, Agricultural Schedule Elizabeth Staggers, farm owner													
Livestock as of 1 June 1880						1879 Farm Production							
Horses	Working Oxen	Milch cows	Other cattle	Swine	Barnyard poultry	Pounds Butter	Dozen Eggs Produced	Acres in Indian Corn	Bushels Indian Corn	Acres in Cotton	Bales of Ginned Cotton	Cords of Wood Cut	\$\$ Forest Products
4	1	2	3	6	20	40	100	10	100	10	2	10	\$10

Mary's aunt, Amelia Scarborough Norris, had recently arrived from Alabama and lived nearby with her family [2].

Records of Milam County, Texas are sparse, providing few details of Mary's life as a widowed mother during the 1880s. Nancy M. Scarborough undoubtedly spent her life in Mary's household,

presumably dying in the 1880s or 1890s. After a decade as a single mother, Mary married on 20 January 1889 in Milam County, Texas to Ansels Orlando Williamson (21 Nov 1852–5 Jan 1929) [3], son of John Napoleon Bonaparte Williamson (c1822–aft. 1860) and Sarah E. ? (c1834–aft. 1860). For some reason, three years after their marriage, on 21 April 1892, Ansels and Mary obtained a second marriage license from Milam County officials. Their marriage was again solemnized on 7 May 1892 [4]. Orlando Williamson was the brother of the husband of Mary's first cousin, Cynthia Josephine Norris. He had one son from his first marriage, Robert G. Williamson, born in December 1875.

Mary E. Holmes and Ansels Orlando Williamson settled on his farm near Thorndale, in Milam County, and operated it for the next four decades. Mary died on 5 July 1927 of "*Carcinoma of the stomach*," apparently at her home in Thorndale [5]. Eighteen months later, Ansels Orlando Williamson contracted influenza that developed into pneumonia. He perished from it after suffering for six days [6]. Mary and Orlando Williamson are buried in the Thorndale Cemetery, Thorndale, Milam County, Texas.

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Children of Mary Elizabeth Holmes, Granddaughter of Addison Scarborough

Mary Elizabeth Holmes had children by both of her husbands, John N. Staggers and Ansels Orlando Williamson. The 1900 and 1910 federal censuses both indicate that Mary had given birth to six children, but only three were then alive. We can only account for four of Mary's children, three with Jack Staggers and one with Orlando Williamson. All are proved by the 1880 and 1900 federal census records:

1. **Cynthia Viola Staggers** [Lula] (2 Dec 1867–20 Aug 1957) married Preston F. Chandler (Apr 1866–1910/1920).
2. **Hillary R. Staggers** [male] (c1874–1880/1900) died young.
3. **Frances Elizabeth Staggers** [Bettie] (31 Jul 1877–1 Sep 1949) married Aulston Boyd Bonds Jr. (27 Dec 1869–5 Jul 1946).
4. **Howard Ross Williamson** (21 May 1890–2 Dec 1961) married Jimmie R. Boles (29 Nov 1886–28 July 1980).

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Biographical Sketches of the Children of Mary Elizabeth Holmes

1. Cynthia Viola Staggers Chandler

Cynthia Viola Staggers [Lula] (2 Dec 1867–20 Aug 1957) married on 15 June 1885 in Milam County, Texas to Preston F. Chandler (Apr 1866–1910/1920), the son of Enoch Chandler (Mar 1837–aft. 1900) and Permelia A. ? (Mar 1837–aft. 1900). Lula and Preston lived in Fayette County, Texas in 1900, where he worked as a section foreman on the railroad. He worked at the same job in 1910, when they lived in Milano, Milam County.

Preston F. Chandler died between 1910 and 1920, and in 1920, Lula lived in Cameron, Milam County with her son, John E. Chandler. In the 1920s, Lula moved to Austin, where she worked at the Austin State School near Camp Mabry. She worked there until the latter 1930s. By 1940, she had returned to Cameron and lived with her daughter, Viola Chandler Lewis. In 1950, she lived at 602 West 1st Street in Cameron.

Lula Staggers Chandler died at her home in Cameron, Milam County, Texas, and she is buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery in Cameron [1].

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2. Hillary R. Staggers

Hillary R. Staggers [male] (c1874–1880/1900) lived in his mother's Milam County, Texas household in 1880. This is the only record of him, and he presumably died young.

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3. Frances Elizabeth Staggers Bonds

Frances Elizabeth Staggers [Bettie] (31 Jul 1877–1 Sep 1949) was born in San Gabriel, a small community several miles north of Thorndale, in Milam County, Texas. She probably never knew her father, who died before her birth or shortly afterwards.

Bettie Staggers married on 12 January 1893 in Milam County, Texas to Aulston Boyd Bonds Jr. (27 Dec 1869–5 Jul 1946), the son of Aulston Boyd Bonds Sr. (27 Dec 1829–6 Dec 1903) and Mary Hadley Conoley (29 Nov 1840–26 Jun 1880). In 1900 and 1910, Frances Staggers Bonds lived with her family on a rented farm in Milam County, Texas. In 1920, Frances and her family lived on a rented farm in Williamson County, Texas, just to the west of Milam County. In 1930, they again lived on a rented farm in Milam County.

At his death in 1946, Boyd lived in San Gabriel. Frances died a few years later at her home in Thorndale. Their home lay between the two communities, with their regions overlapping. Frances and Aulston Bonds are buried in the Conoley Cemetery, Milam County, Texas [2].

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4. **Howard Ross Williamson**

Howard Ross Williamson (21 May 1890–2 Dec 1961) lived with his parents and half-brother on their farm near Thorndale in 1900. Ross married on 20 June 1909 in Milam County, Texas to Jimmie Roberta Boles (29 Nov 1886–28 July 1980), daughter of George Emmett Boles (4 Mar 1855–13 Feb 1931) and Sarah Amanda Anderson (1859–1924).

In 1910 and 1920, Ross and Jimmie lived in Milam County on his parents' farm. By 1930, they had moved to Lynn County, Texas, where Ross worked as a ginner on a cotton gin. In 1940, he owned a cotton farm in Lynn County. Ross had attended school through the 7th grade. Jimmie had completed three years of high school.

Ross Williamson resided in Wilson, Lynn County, Texas at the time of his death, but he died in the Mercy Hospital in Slaton, Lubbock County, Texas. He died of "*Bronchitis & congestion*" caused by heart failure. His son, George Williamson, gave the information for his death certificate.

Howard and Jimmie Williamson are buried in the Green Memorial Park Cemetery (formerly the Wilson Cemetery) near Wilson, Lynn County, Texas.

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Notes

Early Life in Butler County, Alabama

1. Documentation verifying that Amelia C. Scarborough was the daughter of Addison Scarborough comes from these Butler County, Alabama probate records:
 - [Estates Record 14, pp. 518–519](#) (Estate of Addison Scarborough, list of heirs, filed with Butler County Court on 7 July 1874).
 - [Estates Record 17, pp. 258–259](#) (Citation of heirs of Addison Scarborough, deceased to appear in Butler County Court, 24 October 1874).
 - [Record of Estates 15, pp. 109–110](#) (Estate of Addison Scarborough Sr. Decd, “*a full and true list of the Heirs and Distributees of said Estate*,” filed 19 August 1875 by Jonas W. Jones, Administrator).
 - [Record of Estates 15, pp. 180–181](#) (Final Settlement of Estate of Addison Scarborough, deceased, filed 19 August 1875).
2. [Butler County AL Marriage Book \(1865–1868\), p. 307](#) (John N. Staggers to “*Miss Mary E. Homes*,” 13 December 1866). They were married by “*J. J. Cambin M.G.*,” with the ceremony held “*at Mr. Scarbor’s*.”
3. Compiled Military Service Record, John N. Staggers, private and corporal, Co. K, 17th Alabama Infantry Regiment, Civil War (Confederate).
4. [Butler County AL Record of Estates 15, p. 182](#) (Jones W. Jones, request to approve renting land of Addison Scarborough’s estate to John N. Staggers, 10 February 1876).
5. Butler County AL Mortgage Book N, p. 424 (J. N. Staggers & Elizabeth M. Staggers mortgage to Seth Mercer, 29 April 1868; promissory note signed 29 February 1868; signed as paid 7 September 1868). Presumably, the Elizabeth M. Staggers involved in this mortgage is John N. Staggers’ wife, Mary Elizabeth Holmes, and not his widowed mother, Elizabeth Margaret Roach Staggers. All evidence indicates that John N. and Mary E. Staggers cultivated the farm of her grandfather, Addison Scarborough, from the time of their marriage through 1874.
6. “*The Greenville Advocate*” (Greenville, AL), 20 July 1876 (p. 4, column 6) and 19 February 1880 (p. 3, column 6). The 1876 paper referenced James H. Staggers as a deputy sheriff, whereas the 1880 paper identified him as a justice of the peace for Beat No. 5.
7. Butler County AL Deeds & Mortgages Book W, pp. 99–100 (James H. and Louretta Staggers and John N. and Mary E. Staggers mortgage to J. T. McKinzie, 1 January 1872). The document stated that the Staggers owed \$2000 due 15 January 1872. The land they mortgaged lay in Sections 29 and 20, Township 11, Range 16.
8. Butler County AL Deeds & Mortgages Book W, pp. 60–61 (James H. & John N. Staggers promissory note and mortgage to John T. McKinzie, 7 March 1872).
9. [Butler County AL Deeds & Mortgages Book AA, pp. 49–50](#) (“*Mrs. Nancy Scarbrough & J. N. Staggers*” mortgage to Seale & McGehee to cover promissory note of \$100, 18 April 1873; “*Nancy Scarbrough*”).
10. [Butler County AL Deeds & Mortgages Book CC, pp. 99–101](#) (J. N. Staggers promissory note and mortgage to Steiner, McGehee, & Co., 23 May 1874).
11. [Butler County AL Estates Record 14, pp. 491–492](#) (Sale of Estate of Addison Scarborough, sale: 27 July 1874; filed 28 July 1874).
12. [Butler County AL Record of Estates 15, pp. 109–110](#) (Estate of Addison Scarborough Sr. Decd, “*a full and true list of the Heirs and Distributees of said Estate*,” filed 19 August 1875 by Jonas W. Jones, Administrator).

Immigration to Milam County, Texas

1. [Butler County AL Record of Estates 15, pp. 183–184](#) (Power of attorney of J. N. Staggers, Mary E. Staggers, and Nancy M. Scarborough as heirs of Addison Scarborough, deceased, 18 January 1876).
2. 1880 Milam County TX Federal Census, Agricultural Schedule, Precinct N° 5, ED #105, p. 23, line #5: Elizabeth Staggers.
3. Milam County TX Marriage Book 4 (1886–1889), p. 362 (A. O. Williamson to “*Mrs. Mary E. Staggers*,” 20 January 1889). J. D. Rankin performed their marriage.
4. [Milam County TX Marriage Book 5 \(1889–1895\), p. 482](#) (A. O. Williamson to “*Mrs. Elizabeth Staggers*,” 7 May 1892). The marriage was performed by J. J. McBee.
5. Texas State Board of Health, Standard Certificate of Death #24540, #22144, “*Mary Elizabeth Williamson*,” place of death: Thorndale, Milam County; female, white, married; birth: 1 September 1846; death: 5 July 1927; cause of death: “*Carcinoma of the Stomach*,” occupation: Farming; birthplace: Alabama; father: “*—Homes*,” mother: “*don’t know*,” informant: “*A. O. Williamson*,” burial: Thorndale.
6. Texas State Board of Health, Standard Certificate of Death #5739, “*Ansando Williamson*,” male, white, married; place of death: Thorndale, Milam County; birth: 21 November 1852; death: 5 January 1929; age at death: “*76 yrs, 1 mos. 14 ds.*,” cause of death: “*Pneumonia 6 ds.*,” secondary cause: “*Influenza*,” occupation: Farming; birthplace: Mississippi; parents: “*Don’t know*,” informant: “*Ross Williamson*,” burial: Thorndale Cemetery.

Biographical Sketches of the Children of Mary Elizabeth Holmes

1. *"The Austin American"* (Austin, TX), 24 August 1957, p. 6, column 7.
2. *"The Taylor Daily Press"* (Taylor, TX), 1 September 1949, p. 1, column 8.

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