

**JOSEPH L. ALTMAN**  
**September 11, 1855 - August 25, 1925**

**ELIZA IRVIN (CLARK) ALTMAN**  
**October 10, 1861 - July 11, 1938**

Joseph L. Altman and Eliza Irvin Clark were my great grandparents. Joseph was the eighth child and sixth son of Thomas and Martha (Green) Altman, born September 11, 1855 near Jasper, Hamilton County, Florida. It was there he spent his youth and grew to manhood. He married Eliza Irvin Clark, November 21, 1876 in Hamilton County. Joseph was twenty-one and Eliza Irvin was barely fifteen.

Eliza Irvin Clark, called "Irvin" by family and friends, was the first and only child of the marriage of Thomas J. Clark and his wife, Martha Ann Law. Thomas and Martha Ann were married January 21, 1858 at Jasper, Hamilton County, Florida.

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Let me digress here for a moment from the Altman to story to share with you a little bit about Irvin's father, Thomas J. Clark. He was the son of David and Elizabeth (Rivers) Clark and was born in 1834 near Louisville, Jefferson County, Georgia.

Sometime in 1861 Thomas J. Clark enlisted in Company F, 5th Florida Infantry, along with several of his friends and perhaps kinsmen, in Hamilton County. His company was commanded by Captain John Frink. According to the letters written to his wife, Martha Ann, Thomas apparently served in several major battles, one being the Second Battle of Manassas (or Bull Run) in Virginia and the other being the Battle of Maryland. In one letter, he added a postscript: *"I have walked over more ded (sic) Yankees than I ever want to do again."*

Thomas died November 11, 1862 of wounds received on September 17, 1862 in the only Civil War battle fought on Maryland soil. The critical Battle of Maryland, called the Battle of Antietam by the Union army and the Battle of Sharpsburg by the Confederates, is known as the bloodiest day of the Civil War. (The Yankees named their battles after the nearest creek or stream of water and the Confederates named their battles after the location of the nearest town or community.) The twelve-hour Battle of Antietam Creek is reported to be the deadliest one-day engagement in American military history. "At last the sun went down and the battle ended," one historian wrote, "smoke heavy in the air, the twilight quivering with the anguished cries of thousands of wounded men."

It also marked the first time in our annals that photographs were taken of the dead on a battlefield. On that fateful summer-like day, in just 24 hours, the fields around the horrified town of Sharpsburg were strewn with 23,000 dead and wounded soldiers - 12,000 on the Union side and 11,000 on the Confederate side.

Ultimately, McClellan succeeded in halting Lee in one of the bitterest and bloodiest days of the war. Critical to the defeat was the Confederate battle plan which McClellan somehow obtained, thus giving him a tactical advantage. The Battle of Antietam was probably one of the most decisive battles of the Civil War.

After the battle the pastures and area surrounding Sharpsburg, Keedysville and Boonsboro were blanketed with tent hospitals and makeshift graveyards. The battle occurred on September 17, 1862, and Thomas J. Clark, father of one-year old Eliza Irvin Clark, was wounded in the leg and breast. He was moved into the village of Shepherdstown, Virginia, just across the Potomac River, nine miles from Harper's Ferry, and was cared for there by Ellie Reustch, a townswoman, until he died seven weeks later on November 11, 1862. Three days later on November 14, 1862, Ellie Reustch wrote Martha Ann a letter that began, "*Dear Mrs. Clark, it becomes my painful duty to inform you...*," and she enclosed a lock of his hair.

The Civil War letters and poignant poem Thomas wrote to his wife just before going into that immense battle causes genuine heartache, even now after all these years. Tears were flowing down my cheeks by the time I read the last one. But I will leave that story to be shared another time in another book, sometime in the future.

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Thus, Irvin Clark was destined never to know and grow up with her own father, but she did correspond in later years after the war with her grandmother, Elizabeth (Rivers) Clark, then living in Warren County, Georgia.

And of course after Irvin married Joseph Altman and moved to Texas, she corresponded with her mother, brothers and sisters, who stayed behind in Florida.

Irvin's mother, Martha Ann, was the daughter of Joseph Elliott Law and Sarah E. Knight. Martha was born about 1841 in Hamilton County and died there sometime between 1861 and 1886. She is buried in the old Swift Creek cemetery.

Two years after her husband, Thomas J. Clark, died of his wounds received during the Civil War, Martha Ann married Henry T. Jackson,

December 7, 1864, in Hamilton County. They reared a family of seven children, who were half brothers and sisters to Eliza Irvin Clark. Their names were:

1. Sarah E. (no data);
2. Joseph Benjamin, born 1867 (named after his two grandfathers); married Tabitha Thomas. He died August 31, 1910.
3. Henry Clay, born 1870; married Mollie Stewart, June 5, 1892. She died May 5, 1895. Henry married second Eugenia Hewitt, February 26, 1896. He died January 7, 1949.
4. Cornelia Clifford Jackson, born 1872; married Raford Thomas.
5. Mary Law Jackson, born ?; married first, Ben Thomas; married second, Brake Thomas, a cousin to Ben.
6. Thomas, born ?; died October 1941;
7. Agnes Jackson, born ?; married Bryant Thomas.

My mother told me that Uncle Clay Jackson was the only one of the Florida Jacksons who ever came to see Grandma and Aunt Gladys while they lived in Texas.

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Little is known of Joseph and Irvin's early married life. Their first child, a son whom they named Rufus Eldon, was born August 19, 1878, but he died 15 months later on November 19, 1879. The young couple didn't let this unhappy event discourage them, however, because another little son, Joseph W., age four months, is shown with Joseph and Irvin in the 1880 Federal census of Hamilton County. The census taker either wrote down the child's name in error as Joseph W., else they later decided to change this child's name, since it was Hubert Launcelot (called Launcie), who was born to them in the spring on March 11, 1880. In the census, Joseph Altman is listed as age 25 and his occupation is given as "works on farm." Eliza Irvin's age was listed as 19. The children who followed were: Dora Viola, born December 19, 1881 and Reuben Arthur, born April 1885.

It is believed the first two children were born in Hamilton County near Jasper, the county seat, but Reuben Arthur, was born in adjoining Suwannee County at McAlpin, where his parents may have been living and working on a farm there. Or, it may be possible by then that Joseph had

started to make his living as a carpenter, a trade he followed all his life after his move to Texas.

They had been married about ten years, when, sometime between 1885 and 1887, having heard of the new adventures and possibilities in Texas, Joseph and Irvin Altman made plans to move westward. After disposing of their little farm, they set out with three small children, taking with them Joseph's elderly father, Thomas Altman, whose wife Martha had died about five years earlier. Also making the trip was one of Joseph's older sisters, Sarah Jane, and her husband, Robert Fewox, and their children. Sarah was called by her middle name of "Jane." More than likely there were others who joined the group headed west.

Exactly what prompted Joe Altman to "pull up stakes" in Florida and move to Texas is not known. Joseph had become a skilled carpenter and he no doubt had heard of the many new towns springing up in all parts of Texas where there was plenty of work available for men in his trade. Also, we shouldn't discount the pioneering spirit that had already drawn many from the states in the Old South to the newer western regions. Perhaps Joe Altman just wanted to see for himself what the prospects were.

The exact year of the family's move to Texas is uncertain, but it is probable that they left Florida in the fall of 1886 after their crops were harvested. How they traveled, how they fared along the way and how long the journey lasted is not recorded. It is regrettable that someone in the family never took the trouble to write of this experience as it certainly would have been a story of much interest to all the Altman descendants.

Since this is to be a factual account, it will be left to the reader's imagination the adventures of a journey covering approximately 800 miles, crossing the Mississippi and other un-bridged streams, and passing through great forests along roads that were sometimes dry and dusty, sometimes muddy and deeply rutted. They probably traveled in wagons pulled by teams of horses, bringing with them their personal belongings and personal effects. We can be sure that Joseph brought along his carpenter tools and whatever farming equipment he may have had. Most likely they camped out in tents, sleeping on the ground at night.

Just picture the exhaustion and weariness felt by each of these travelers, old and young, as they set about making camp for the night. They must have been exhausted after making such an arduous day-long journey every day for weeks in a jolting wagon. And then having to find wood to make a fire and cook an evening meal for five adults and at least five or six hungry children, not to mention feeding and watering any livestock they may have brought along, as well as the horses that pulled their wagons. It must have been doubly difficult when it rained and stormed, as surely it did, while

they were on the road. Imagine the planning and preparations that had to be made for a journey of this distance and time.

Eventually the family arrived in Texas where we first find them living at Waverly (now called New Waverly about a mile away from the old townsite) in southern Walker County, where in the early days lumbering and plantation farming were the chief industries. Not far from Huntsville, Waverly was situated in the wooded plains of southeast Texas, and was well known as a center of finance, farming, education and culture, being settled in 1845 by planters from Alabama. It was there that Joseph and Irvin's fifth child was born, Bertie Bertram Altman, who became my dearly loved grandfather. He was born in the spring, March 29, 1888.

By 1889 it appears that the family had moved to Madison County in what is called now the post oak belt of Central East Texas, for it was while they were living there that Joseph's father, Thomas Altman, became ill and died December 18, 1889. It is possible, too, that Thomas Altman was living with his daughter, Sarah Jane and her family, at the time of his death, as Robert Fewox had bought a farm and were also living in Madison County. According to the records of his granddaughter, Aunt Gladys Altman, Thomas Altman was buried the following day in Madison County at Mt. Tabor near the Crossroads community. His grave is not marked. It must have been a sad Christmas for the families of Joseph and his sister, Sarah Jane Fewox, since their father had probably taken turns living with both of his children for eight years, following the death of their mother.

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Robert Fewox, husband of Sarah Jane, is first found in the Madison County tax records in 1890, paying a poll tax of \$1.50. By 1891, Robert had purchased a 102-acre farm located in the N. B. Green Survey and valued at \$500. He was also paying tax on a carriage, buggy or wagon (presumably a wagon), valued at \$15; two horses or mules valued at \$85, and 23 head of cattle valued at \$109. That year he paid state, county and a poll tax of \$7.50.

By 1895, Robert had improved his farm and it was valued at \$600. He was then paying taxes on one wagon valued at \$15, machinery valued at \$25, six horses valued at \$120, twelve cows valued at \$75 and three hogs valued at \$5.00. For these assets, he paid a tax of \$10.57.

In searching the tax rolls of Leon County from 1884 through 1896, the Joseph Altman family first appeared there in 1890. This date coincides with the birth date of Thomas Dewitt, born December 30, 1890 at the small community of Marquez, not far from Leona. As evidenced by a tax receipt in my possession, Joseph Altman was paying taxes at the Leon County courthouse that year in the amount of \$2.09.

While scanning the microfilmed tax records of Leon County for Joseph Altman's name on the tax rolls, I found him paying the identical tax mentioned above of \$2.09 for one horse valued at \$15 and a cow valued at \$15. By 1891 he was paying tax on two horses or mules valued at \$80 and two cows valued at \$20. Total tax paid that year was \$2.70. By 1892 the value of his two horses was listed at \$100 and his two cows at \$40.

In 1893 Joseph was no longer listed on the Leon County tax rolls and apparently had moved over into adjacent Madison County just across the Leon County boundary line. Joseph's hard work must have been profitable for several years as he was able to buy a larger and better farm in Madison County, since another tax receipt shows him paying state and county taxes of \$5.32 on 160 acres.

In 1895 Joseph purchased a 200-acre farm, located in the George Kirby Survey in Madison County, valued at \$400, which is probably the farm located near the community of Hennessey where three more children were later born. That year, Joe Altman was paying taxes on one wagon valued at \$15, two cows valued at \$35, machinery and equipment valued at \$10 (possibly his carpenter's tools or perhaps farm implements), and five hogs. For this he paid a tax of \$6.68 in 1895.

This family farm at Hennessey provided support for the Altman's vigorous household of children. In 1895 the children's ages ranged from fifteen to two. Launcie was 15, Dora was 13, Arthur was 10, Bertie was 7 and little Cossy Conrad was 2. They were a close-knit and affectionate family, and they were hard workers.

Crops of cotton, corn, field peas, ribbon cane and maize were grown. Their farm had a sufficient number of cows, beef cattle, hogs and chickens, and each child had their chores to do to help out. Milking, gardening and cooking, along with rearing her children, took up most of Irvin's daylight hours. She raised a large vegetable garden, which Joseph and Launcie kept cultivated, and the younger children kept weeded. In the summer she canned, dried and preserved food for the winter months ahead. All the children helped with the harvest and canning process. There was plenty of work to go around.

Money for staple goods, such as flour, sugar and coffee, was provided by the "cash crop" of cotton, and Joseph supplemented their income with carpentry work. At one undetermined period of time, according to our cousin, Ruby Lehman (daughter of Thomas and Dora Viola (Altman) Lehman), Joe Altman hauled the mail on horseback from Madisonville to Huntsville.

Community life centered mainly around school, church, and the general store at Hennessey. In those days schools were mostly one or two rooms, where short terms were held for the children between crops. Emphasis was placed on the "Three Rs" - "readin, 'ritin', and 'rithmetic." *McGuffey's Readers* hammered home lasting lessons in morality, patriotism, and idealism. One copy-exercise ran:

*Beautiful hands are they that do  
Deeds that are noble, good and true;  
Beautiful feet are they that go  
Swiftly to lighten another's woe.*

While living on this farm at Hennessey, as mentioned before, three more children were born to Joe and Irvin Altman. In 1892 a little baby girl was born, but the child, named Nora Inez, died nineteen days later and was laid to rest in the City Cemetery at Madisonville. Just a little over a year later and right after Christmas, another son, Cossy Conrad, was born December 31, 1893. Their last son, Elmer Clyde, who was to become one of my favorite great uncles, was born within the next five years on January 13, 1897.

Tragedy struck the family in 1898 when little Cossy Conrad, then age five, was accidentally drowned, August 26. With hearts full of sorrow, they buried him beside Nora Inez in the City Cemetery at Madisonville. There is no record to tell us how this accident happened, only a beautiful old card that Joseph and Irvin had printed as a remembrance of their young children, who never ceased to be forgotten.

Enumerated on the 1900 Texas census on June 7, Precinct No. 2 near the village of Leona, the Joe L. Altman family is found. "Joe" is listed as age 44, born Florida, and appears with his wife, Eliza, age 38, also born Florida, and six children: Hubert L., age 20, born October 1880 in Florida; Dora V., age 18, born December 1881, Florida; Reuben E., age 15, born April 1885 in Florida; Bertie B., age 12, born March 1888, Texas; Thomas D., age 9, born December 1890, Texas; and Elmer C., age 3, born 1897, Texas. Lora Gladys Altman was yet to be born the following year in at Abilene in Taylor County.

*(There is an error in the written census record because Reuben Arthur's middle initial should be an "A" instead of an "E". Census takers were notorious for their misspelling and errors in taking down the family information. On the other hand, it may have been the error of the person in the household giving the information that day, who might even have been a child minding the younger children while the adults were out working in the field.)*



On December 12, 1900 Joseph and Irvin's only daughter, Dora Viola, then almost nineteen, left the family circle when she married Thomas C. Lehman at Normangee, a small village on the Leon-Madison County line. Irvin must have missed her daughter more than anyone else in the family because Dora helped her mother with household chores and with the younger children. The young couple first settled not far from her parents, but by 1901 they moved to West Texas, along with Joseph and Irvin, to Elmdale in eastern Taylor County, almost within the city limits of Abilene.

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*(Thomas and Dora Lehman went on to become the parents of nine children, including one of our favorite family cousins, Rubye (Lehman) Gorman. Several of the Lehman-Altman descendants still live in the Madisonville-Huntsville area at this writing.)*

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Abilene at the turn of the 20th century was a very young town. In 1881, only nineteen years prior to the Altman's arrival, Abilene was a city of tents - population about 300. Everyone was waiting for the Texas and Pacific to bring the railroad through Taylor County. When *The Dallas Morning News* announced in January 1881 that the Texas and Pacific Railroad would begin selling town lots on March 15, immigrants flocked by the hundreds in to the town. It fast became a "rip-roaring boom town," developing first as a cattle-shipping center. By 1900 Abilene was a budding trading, banking and manufacturing center. Construction was everywhere, including the site of the Abilene State Hospital built in 1901 and Abilene Christian College, soon to become the world's largest senior college.

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It may have been the numerous construction projects offering plenty of jobs and good pay that lured Joseph Altman from his home in Central Texas. Farm prices in the 1890's are said to have been very low and the country had been in an economic crunch during this decade.

Once again the family pulled out in wagons on a new adventure, as they headed west on the approximately 300-mile trip to Abilene, the county seat of Taylor County. As before, we can only guess at the excitement this journey must have produced for the children as they helped get ready for the long trip, though no doubt they hated to leave their friends in Hennessey that they had played and gone to school with.

As mentioned earlier, Joseph and Irvin's daughter, Dora and her new husband, Thomas Lehman, accompanied them on this move.



The following summer Joseph and Irvin were settled in Abilene and blessed with their last child, whom they named Lora Gladys, born August 9, 1901. At that time Joseph was 46 and Irvin was 40.

How long the family stayed in Abilene is not known exactly, but it was probably about 1907. Two sons married while the family lived there. Hubert Launcelot, called "Launcie," married Mary Shive Kean on May 19, 1904. Two years later my grandfather, Bertie Bertram Altman, met and began courting my grandmother, Regina Palestine Stockton. Her parents, Benjamin Stockton and Frances Lavada (McElhannon), were early settlers in Abilene, having come there from Jackson County, Georgia in 1881, when the town was first being laid out.

Bertie and Regina were married at Cisco in neighboring Eastland County on February 17, 1907. He was not quite nineteen and she had turned nineteen the previous summer.

When Joseph and Irvin Altman returned to Madison County in late 1907, their two sons, Launcie and Bertie, remained in Abilene to begin families of their own. Three children were born to my grandparents, Bertie and Regina Altman, while they lived at Abilene, including my mother, Frances Lavada, named for her Grandmother Stockton.

Ruby Lehman, mother's first cousin, who was a favorite cousin to everyone in the family, remembered that Aunt Gladys Altman's first teacher was Miss Mae Bell Waldrop, who taught school at Mt. Tabor, not far from the communities of Hennessey and Crossroads. My great-uncles, Thomas Dewitt (better known to all the family by his initials, "T.D.") and Elmer, also attended school at Mt. Tabor. At that time they were the only three children left at home.

Thomas and Dora Lehman didn't stay long in Abilene for some reason. Sometime after 1902, they moved to Rosebud, Falls County, Texas where Thomas Lehman's people lived and were there until 1914. Five children were born to them while they lived there: Johnny Eldon in 1903; twins, Reubin Loyd and Ruby Lois, born 1905; Ella Mae in 1907; and T. C. (initial name only) in 1909. Sometime after 1909 this family returned to Leon County where Thomas bought a large farm and where they lived out their life. They had two more sons born on this farm, J. W. (initial name only), born in 1914, and Marvin Carl, born 1916.

When he was 23, Thomas Dewitt Altman married Lemma E. Culburch at Leona on August 10, 1913. Two years later, Reuben Arthur, then age 30, married Lillie Thornton on September 14, 1914 at San Angelo, Texas.

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Ten years before Joseph and Irvin Altman moved to Fort Worth, the population was 52,376 in 1900. They were already living in Fort Worth when the 1910 census was taken. In 1916 Aunt Gladys graduated from North Side High School. Pictures in an old photo album show a neat white house, with the caption written by Aunt Gladys - "About 1917 when we lived on 2415 Rosen Street in North Fort Worth." For sometime the family attended the Rosen Heights Baptist Church on Roosevelt Street, where Aunt Gladys was active in Sunday School. Other pictures are shown with friends at a "berry-picking party" and a group on a picnic outing.

By 1921 at lease, they were living at 2624 Azle Avenue where Grandpa had a grocery store, located next door to their home at 2622 Azle Avenue. The store, where he sold groceries, meat and general merchandise, had a big front porch with four or five steps down to the sidewalk. The porch was a gathering place for neighbors who stopped to pass the time of day after buying their groceries. When they weren't busy, Grandpa Altman sat on the front porch in a straight-back, cane bottom chair and watched the traffic go by. Azle Avenue was on the north side of town, which was called "North Fort Worth." If you were going downtown from Azle Avenue where they lived, my mother said you had to pass right by the Fort Worth stockyards. In the twenties, the stockyards was a rip-roaring place.

At one time or another all of the Altman boys lived and worked in Fort Worth. Uncle Launcie was living there when his third son was born. He was a barber by trade. Uncle Elmer, Uncle Arthur, and Uncle Elmer each worked at various times, beginning as early as 1919, for Swift and Company, one of the earliest and largest meat-packing plants. At one time, Bertie Altman worked there as a butcher. Both Uncle Arthur and Uncle T. D. were also butchers, but Uncle Elmer worked in the stock pens. Uncle Elmer worked two different times, once for a nine year period at the stockyards.

Fort Worth, the legendary cow town, in early times was billed as the "Queen of the Prairie" and flourished as the southernmost center of the ranching and meat-packing industry. From the 1870's through World War II, livestock by the millions were loaded on Exchange Street and shipped by rail to the north. The pens, once sprawling over 30 acres, were floored in brick and a dirt overlay that dried to dust or churned to mud depending on the weather. At one time the stockyards employed 8,000, and the market reached five states. Before World War II when Armour and Swift packing houses in Fort Worth relied on the local stockyards for their supply, cattle volume reached 400,000 annually and sheep trading was sometimes double that figure. Horses and mules were auctioned and run in large herds up Exchange Street to barns opposite the two-story stucco Exchange Building. During World War I, this was the largest draft animal market in the world.

In this day and time, the stockyard area of North Fort Worth is being turned into a tourist attraction, with fashionable restaurants, bars and shops and Billy Bob's where you can go to dance and listen to western music. Some folks like Uncle Richard and Aunt Mary Evelyn enjoy trying to ride the mechanical bull there! (Not really! They just had their picture made sitting on it.) My daughter Jennifer took them around Fort Worth one summer when they were here on vacation. Fort Worth has always been famous for its rodeos, now held in the Coliseum. It is reported that rodeos rank above football in this unusual town.

Before I started to school I can remember a time when we stopped by the stockyards on our way to visit Grandma and Aunt Gladys when they lived on Vaughan Boulevard. (I can still recall the smell, too!) Uncle Elmer worked there then and we found him perched astraddle a high, narrow, wooden fence, counting cattle as they were herded through a chute with wide gates at both ends. Two other men were also strategically balanced atop each side of the chute, counting cattle as they came through the enclosure. Out of the three men, two were required to have the same count or the cows had to be recounted. They didn't count by two's as we would, but counted by fours, eights and tens. As we approached the fence where Uncle Elmer was sitting, mother called out, "*Hey, you missed one!*" Uncle Elmer looked around, stopped counting and started grinning and said, "*Well, I'll be dadgummed.*" (This was a favorite by-word with all the Altman men I ever knew. I never heard my grandfather or my uncles say a curse word. My grandmother's by-word was, "*Well, I'll be John Brown!*")

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In December 1995, my first cousin, Phyllis Ladyman, sent me the following obituary on our great-grandmother, Eliza Irvin Altman, which is different from the two I have in my files:

### **DEATH NOTICES**

*Phillips Funeral Home*  
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*ALTMAN, Mrs. Eliza Irwin, age 77, of 2312 Vaughn, died at the residence at 9 o'clock Monday morning, July 11, 1938. Survived by daughter, Miss Gladys Altman; five sons, H. L. Altman, San Angelo; R. A. of Florida; B. B. of Clayton, N.M.; T. D., Madisonville; E. C., Burleson; 35 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren.*

Funeral services will be conducted at 5 p.m. Tuesday by Reverend R. R. Newby, pastor of the Polytechnic Assembly of God Church, assisted by the Reverend G. H. Levy, pastor of Oak Grove Baptist Church, at the Oak Grove Baptist Church near Burleson.

Burial will be in the Tye Cemetery near Oak Grove. Grandsons will be pallbearers. The funeral cortege will leave the residence at 4 p.m. Phillips Funeral Home in charge.



[This story is excerpted from a book I wrote in the early 1980s, titled, "***One Branch of The Altman Family: From Florida to Texas,***" which I took to a 1986 Altman Family Reunion at Chickasha, Oklahoma, hosted by my first cousin, Phyllis (Altman) Ladyman, and distributed to each family attending. JCB]