

LANDRETH FAMILY ALBUM



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Photographs and History of the Landreth Family and the Amity Community in Comanche County, Texas

Inside cover
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With a Social History of one Extended Family

Photos from the Landreth Family Album of Jay B. Littlefield
Dr. Jim Littlefield's father
and
dictation provided by Jim's Uncle, Hood Cornelious Littlefield, the author's uncle

Compiled and re-created by James Landreth Littlefield, M.D.

and
photo extraction, digitization and photo book creation by
Brittany Frye

Saint Louis MO July 4, 2026



This album is available at Jameslandreth.com

Preface to Landreth Family Album (LFA)

Many little towns in America had photographers who served as a nineteenth-century recorder of rural life. Most albums disappeared, this one survived. This should be considered as a photographic record of one nineteenth-century family

This small volume reproduces a family photo album that was given to my father, John Benjamin Littlefield by his mother, Ada Landreth Littlefield. It is a collection of photographs of the Landreth family and friends, all being made in the last years of the 19th century and early years of the 20th century. These photos are mostly studio portraits made by photographers in the small towns near the homestead. This home-place was part of the Amity Community. This is where Thornton and Eliza Landreth built the family homestead. The house no longer stands. Their farm was located near the Amity church in Comanche County, Texas. It is about twenty miles northwest of the town of Comanche, Texas, the county seat. The nearest small towns are Rising Star, to the north west, now almost non-existent and Sipe Springs, to the north east, both about 6 miles from Amity. The Amity church began as a "brush-arbor" church and later a substantial stone one-room church was built but is now gone as well. However, just down the road from where the church was is located the Amity Cemetery where most of the people in these pictures are buried.

Sometime in the mid-1990s, I (James Landreth Littlefield) made a trip to Los Angeles and visited with my Uncle, Hood C. Littlefield. Uncle Hood was the oldest child of Ada Landreth and Jesse Littlefield and Ada was the youngest child of Thornton Landreth. Hood was the older brother of my father, Jay B. Littlefield (John Benjamin). I took with me the family photograph album which had been given to J.B. by his mother and we sat at Hood's table, along with Aunt Thelma, and went through the pictures. I had a tape-recorder and recorded his observations and recollections of the photos therein. These were transcribed and collected with the pictures. Much of what he described is used as descriptions for these photos. The effort to extract from the album and scan and capture the images digitally was done through the kind efforts of Brittany Frye.

Before we begin with the pictures from the album there are several images of the countryside, farmhouse and family which were not part of the family album.

The Landreth Farm and the Land Around It

The Landreth homestead was located near the small community of Amity in northwestern Comanche County, only a few miles east of the Brown County line. This part of Central Texas lies within the western Cross Timbers, a landscape of gently rolling hills, oak woodlands, native grasslands, and small creeks. It was a country well suited to family farming, although success depended upon both hard work and favorable weather.

The underlying rock is limestone, sandstone, and shale deposited in shallow seas during the Permian Period nearly 280 million years ago. Weathering produced the thin, stony soils and the hard white limestone known locally as "caliche" which remains a common source of road-building material. Today, large limestone quarries west of Amity continue to produce crushed stone from these ancient formations.

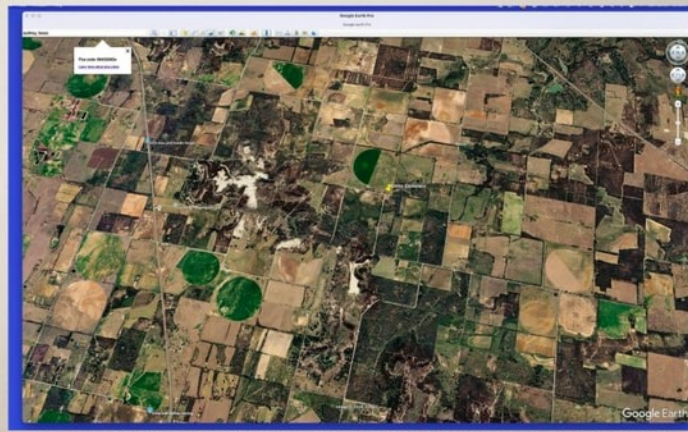
The soils varied from shallow limestone ridges to deeper sandy and clay loams in the valleys. Cotton was the principal cash crop during Thornton Benjamin Landreth's lifetime, while peanuts later became an important crop on the lighter soils. Corn, oats, gardens, orchards, cattle, hogs, and poultry completed the diversified farms that sustained most families.

Rainfall averaged about thirty inches annually but varied greatly from year to year. Spring rains encouraged planting, while hot, dry summers and periodic droughts constantly challenged farmers. A successful harvest depended as much upon the weather as upon skill and determination.

Family tradition holds that Thornton eventually owned approximately a section of land—about 640 acres—a substantial holding for the time. The comfortable farmhouse seen in family photographs suggests years of steady prosperity built through land ownership, diversified farming, and the labor of an industrious family. My father, John Benjamin ("J.B.") Littlefield, grew up during a remarkable period of change. He remembered horse-drawn farming, steam-powered threshing machines, the arrival of tractors and automobiles, and eventually rural electrification. His generation bridged the gap between nineteenth-century agriculture and the modern world. Thornton's generation conquered the frontier with axes and mule teams. Jay B.'s generation harnessed steam engines and tractors. My generation watched bulldozers reshape the land. Each generation solved the problems of its own time, and each left its mark on the same landscape.

About where the old place was.

On the old railroad map for Comanche County one can see a tear mark on the left of the image. On the edge of the map is the town of May. If you take the country road northeast out of May, near the tear is the town of Zourette, which is now gone. Then go southeast parallel to the county line a couple of miles and that's where the Amity Community was. Most of the towns noted on the map such as Bibb, Mercer Gap, Zourette no longer exist.



About the Landreth Family

The Landreth surname appears to have originated in Scotland in what is called "The Anglo-Scottish Borderlands". This region was fought over between the Scots and the English over many centuries. The town of origin is called Hume (or Home). In the family histories (i.e., Eugene Landreth's book: "Forebears and descendants of Landreth pioneers") the earliest Landreth is recorded as Cuthbert Landreth (1525 - 1575). Much of the early history lacks reliable documentation. More historically coherent and reliable records are for the Landreths beginning in the 1800s, for example that of John Emmet Landreth, born in Montgomery City, VA and died in Greenville, South Carolina in 1812. He might be considered as a "key anchor generation".

A descendent (great-great grandson) of Cuthbert was Thomas Samuel Landreth who was born in 1710 in Hume, Berwickshire, Scotland. He was likely the first Landreth to emigrate to North America sometime after 1783. His wife died in North Carolina in 1800 and he is buried in Virginia.

From John Emmet, the family then began a migration pattern through the South, first from Virginia to Rowan County, North Carolina, then Greenville, SC, then Calhoun City, MS and finally to Comanche County, Texas. The primary progenitor of the Texas family was Thornton Benjamin Landreth, born 7-21-1850, son of Benjamin Franklin Landreth and Elizabeth Petty Poole. In 1860 he lived in Calhoun City, MS and in 1870 Pittsboro, MS, and by 1900 was living in Justice Precinct 6, Comanche TX, which is where the family homestead is located and now to be described.

A simplified lineage would be:

1. Cuthbert Landreth (1525-1575), Scotland (traditional earliest documented ancestor)
2. Several intervening generations in Scotland, not well documented
3. Thomas Samuel Landreth (died 1800, Virginia)
4. John Landreth (died 1812, Greenville District, South Carolina)
5. Lewis Alfred Landreth (1777-?, born Rowan County, North Carolina; lived primarily in Greenville, South Carolina)
6. Benjamin Franklin Landreth (born Greenville, South Carolina; died Calhoun County, Mississippi)
7. Thornton Benjamin (or "Thornty") Landreth (1850-1941; born Tuscaloosa, Alabama; later lived and died in Comanche County, Texas, in a small farming community called "Amity")
8. Thornton married Eliza Elizabeth Powell in 1870 and they had five children: Alto, Benjamin and John (twins), Robert and Ada. He died in 1941 (and she in 1924) and both are buried in the Amity Cemetery.
9. Each of these children married and had children. They and their children are noted on the Landreth Family Tree.



Above: a very rare tintype photograph of probably Benjamin Franklin Landreth (1802-1882), photographed circa 1870-1880. The image was identified on the back as "Great Grandpa Landreth." The age of the sitter, the clothing, and the apparent tintype photographic process all suggest that the subject is most likely Benjamin Franklin Landreth rather than his son Thornton Benjamin Landreth (1850-1941). The loose dark coat, high white shirt, and overall style reminds one more of Civil War and Reconstruction-era rural Southern dress (1860s-1870s). He died in 1882 at the age of 80. An inscription was written later on the reverse "Great Grandpa Landreth", likely by one of Thornton's grandchildren.

A Brief History Lesson

The history of the Landreth family in Texas can be viewed as part of a much larger story that shaped both Europe and America for centuries. In farming societies, land was the principal source of wealth and security. As families grew larger, an important question arose: how could a farm support multiple sons and their future families? In some parts of Europe, particularly England, the custom of primogeniture allowed the eldest son to inherit most or all of the family estate, keeping farms intact from one generation to the next. Younger sons often had to seek their fortunes elsewhere. In other regions, land was divided among all heirs, gradually reducing farms into smaller and less productive parcels. Either system created pressure for migration, and many Europeans looked to North America as a place where land was abundant and ownership was within reach.



A Picture of the Community School. Ada Landreth is indicated as 2nd row, standing.



Left, Historical Marker

Right, the gate to the Amity Cemetery.

Amity", the name meaning friendship was given to the cemetery, community school and the Baptist Church, by the early settlers. Located in what is now Comanche County, but the cemetery used to be in Brown County. From Brownwood take US 183 north, thorough May, TX to CR 495. Turn right onto CR 495. This is a gravel road. Travel 1.8 miles to the junction of CR 487. Turn left and travel 1.3 miles to the junction of Comanche CR 197. Turn right for 4.10 miles to the cemetery. There are 8 Landreths, 4 Littlefields, 2 Gills and 1 Beard buried there.



The Landreth Family Tree: Notes

Opposite is the Landreth Family Tree which I created to illustrate the descendant relatives and relations of Thornton Benjamin Landreth as well as two generations of his fore-bearers. This was created using Powerpoint as it has given me greater creative control. Below is an introduction to the historical context and then some explanatory notes. This chart is the product of original research. Information was derived primarily from Ancestry.com and its references, not from family trees already published on line.

The accompanying Landreth Family Tree is intended as a guide to the principal family line discussed in this volume. It was compiled from census records, death certificates, cemetery inscriptions, family documents, published histories, and genealogical research conducted over many years. Most importantly, as above, is an interview with Thornton's grandson, Hood C. Littlefield sometime in the mid-1990s examining the Landreth Family Album, which is the purpose of this project, that is to perpetuate and understand the Landreth family history.

Like all historical reconstructions, the tree represents the best interpretation of the evidence presently available. In several instances, conflicting records exist regarding dates, places of birth, or family relationships. Where uncertainty remains, it is identified on the chart rather than concealed. Future discoveries may refine or correct portions of the tree. Asterisks, question marks and annotations indicate relationship that remain uncertain.

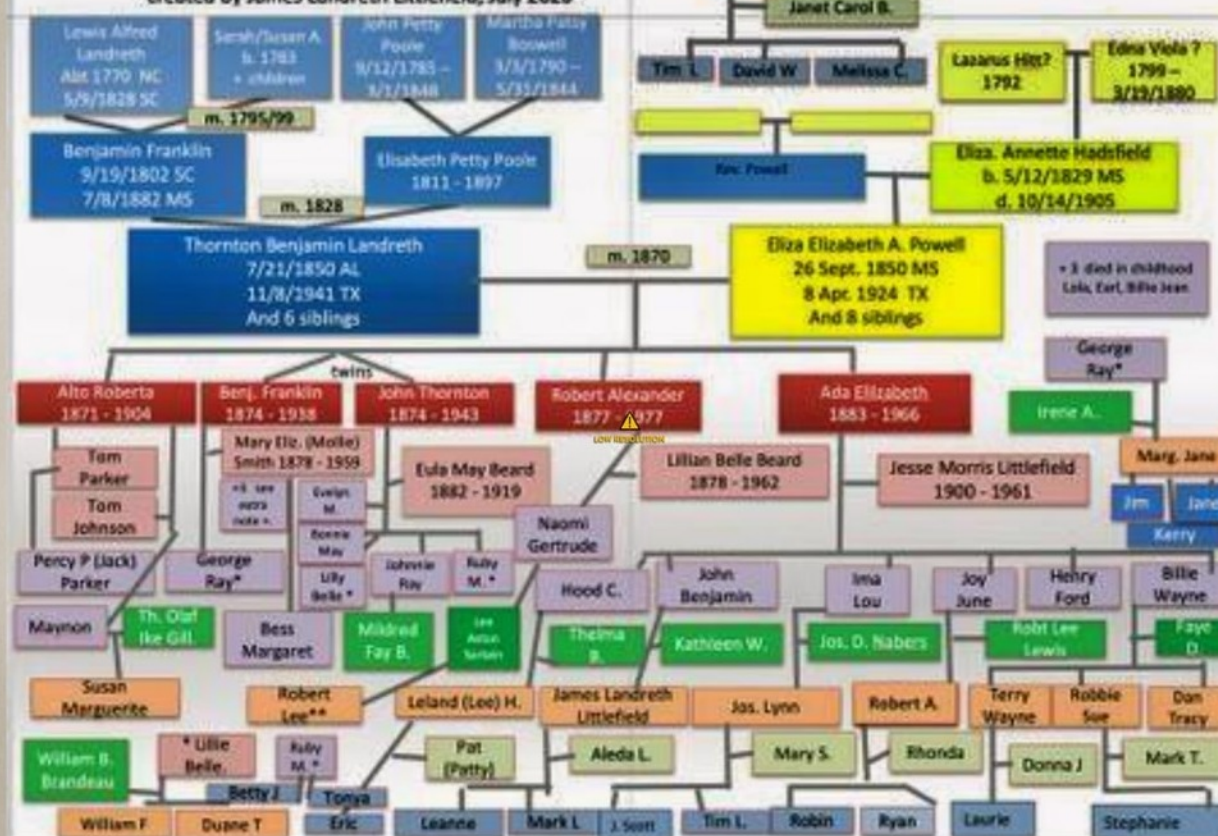
An example of one uncertainty in this record: John Thornton married Eula May Beard in 1870. They had five children, much like Thornton before them. Their dates of birth: Ruby Alice: 1910, Evelyn Marie: 1912, Lillie Belle 1914, Bonnie May, Oct. 1919, Johnnie Ray, Nov 1919. Unfortunately, Eula May died 15 Dec. 1919, about a month after Johnnie Ray was born. The curious thing is Bonnie May was born one month before Johnnie Ray. While biologically possible, it's unlikely and raises questions about her biological parents. One Ancestry record for Bonnie May says: "Mother Unknown", although the vast majority of references to Bonnie May list Eula May as her mother. While true, I would propose not her biological mother, hence she was likely adopted. However, there are no contemporaneous records to suggest otherwise, i.e. no adoption papers. The matter remains unresolved.

More than a record of names and dates, the Landreth family story reflects the broader history of the American South and Southwest. Across successive generations, family members migrated westward through Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas, participating in the settlement and development of new communities. The tree therefore serves not only as a genealogical reference but also as a framework for understanding the lives, movements, and experiences of the individuals whose stories are preserved in this book.

We begin in the upper left with Thornton's great-grandfather, Lewis Alfred, born about 1770 and end at the bottom row with his great-great-grandchildren. Although there is an additional generation of grandchildren, these are not included, mostly cause I ran out of room. Each generation is color coded. There is no significance to the color used. I have included dates of birth and death for Thornton's children's generation but not beyond. Please look carefully at the chart for certain individuals and wives which are not in line with the dependency arrows - cause I ran out of room. Look carefully at the color coding. Ex.: Lillie Belle L. Brandeau, Robert Lee Sartain and George Ray Landreth. My apologies to them.

Landreth Family Tree

created by James Landreth Littlefield, July 2026



The Landreth Homestead, Front View
Comanche County, Texas, circa 1900

This handsome farmhouse was almost certainly the Landreth family home during the closing years of the nineteenth century. Although family tradition attributes its construction to Thorny Benjamin Landreth, the original homesteader, the architectural evidence suggests that it was more likely built after years of successful farming, replacing an earlier and simpler dwelling that would have served the family during the first years on the frontier.



The house is an excellent example of a rural Folk Victorian farmhouse. Constructed of wood-frame clapboard siding, it features steep front-facing gables, decorative porch brackets, spindle railings, and a second-story balcony, details that reflected the popular Victorian tastes of the period while remaining practical for country living. The broad front porch provided welcome shade during the long Texas summers and served as the center of family life, where neighbors were welcomed, children played, and evenings were spent enjoying whatever breeze nature provided. The carefully posed family members, dressed in their Sunday best, transformed this photograph into a statement of pride and accomplishment. The mature shade trees, ornamental shrubs, and fenced yard suggest that the farm had been established for many years. This was no temporary frontier cabin but a permanent family home built to endure. The photograph captures more than a house; it records the fulfillment of a pioneer family's aspirations. Within a single generation, the Landreths had progressed from the hardships of frontier settlement to a comfortable and prosperous farmstead that reflected both industry and stability. The house stood as a visible symbol of that achievement and undoubtedly became the setting for countless family gatherings, celebrations, and everyday moments that shaped the generations that followed. Unlikely TB and Eliza's first house. House likely constructed between 1885 and 1895.

The Landreth Homestead, Rear View Comanche County, Texas, circa 1900

From the reverse of photo, written identification as follows: Left to right Horse, Uncle Bob Landreth (next to fence), Grandpa (T.B.) Landreth against building, Grandma Eliza (next to post), Uncle Ben Landreth, Ada Landreth (later Littlefield), Uncle John Landreth

At the Landreth Homestead about 1900 or a little before that time.

Note: This was copied verbatim likely written by J.B. Littlefield, son of Ada. J.B. was John Benjamin Also stamped, J.A. Brodie PHOTOGRAPHER, Comanche, Tx.



Viewed from the rear, the Landreth homestead reveals the practical side of life on a successful Texas farm. While the front façade presented an attractive appearance to visitors, the back of the house illustrates how the family lived and worked from day to day. The multiple roof-lines suggest that the house may have evolved over time, with additional rooms or a kitchen wing added as the family grew and prospered. Such gradual expansion was common among farm families, whose homes often reflected decades of changing needs rather than a single construction project.

Dominating the scene is the tall windmill, perhaps the most important technological feature on the property. By pumping water from a deep well, it supplied the household, watered livestock, and made the surrounding farmstead far more self-sufficient. Throughout rural Texas, the windmill became an enduring symbol of successful settlement and agricultural independence.

The substantial brick chimneys speak of fireplaces that heated the home during the winter months, while the wide porches and generous windows helped make life bearable during the intense summer heat. The picket fence enclosed what appears to have been a kitchen garden and work yard, where much of the family's daily activity would have taken place. Several members of the family stand quietly for the photographer, reminding us that these photographs were carefully arranged rather than casual snapshots. Together with the front view, this image preserves a remarkably complete record of a farmstead that had matured from frontier beginnings into a comfortable and well-established home.

The Feather Bed That Saved the Wagon

Among the stories handed down through the Landreth family is an account of the journey that brought Thornton Benjamin Landreth and his young wife Eliza Elizabeth from Mississippi to their new home in Texas.

Thornton Benjamin Landreth was born in Alabama on July 21, 1850. By 1860, he was living with his family in Cherry Hill, Calhoun County, Mississippi. He remained there through at least 1870, when he married Elizabeth Powell. Sometime between their marriage in 1870 and the birth of their twin sons, John Thornton Landreth and Benjamin Landreth, in either Arkansas or Texas (both are reported in official records but 1880 Census of Comanche Co. notes John and Ben were born in Arkansas) in 1874, Thornton and Elizabeth made the long overland journey westward to establish a homestead near the Amity community in Comanche County, Texas.

Family tradition recalls that the trip was made by covered wagon, drawn by either horses or oxen. During the journey, the family came to a major river crossing. According to the story, the animals became frightened and bolted when the wagon went in the water. Disaster seemed certain. However, a large feather bed had been securely fastened beneath the wagon. The feather-filled mattress provided enough buoyancy to keep the wagon afloat, allowing the family and their possessions to survive the crossing and continue on their way to Texas.

As with many stories preserved through generations, some details may have changed over time. Family members later identified the crossing as the Mississippi River. Yet Thornton and Eliza Elizabeth were living in Calhoun County, Mississippi before moving to Texas, and the route from northern Mississippi to Comanche County would have involved several significant river crossings. Depending upon the path they followed, they may have crossed the Pearl, Ouachita, Sabine, Trinity, or Brazos Rivers. The Sabine River, which forms much of the boundary between Louisiana and Texas, was a particularly important crossing point for settlers entering Texas and is perhaps the most likely candidate.

Whether the river was the Mississippi or another stream whose name was gradually forgotten, the heart of the story remains entirely plausible. Feather beds were among the most valuable possession carried by pioneer families and were commonly transported during long migrations. When tightly packed in their ticking, feather beds could provide considerable flotation. Historians have documented similar accounts of feather beds and bedding helping to keep wagons, supplies, and people afloat during hazardous river crossings.

The specificity of the feather-bed detail suggests that the story may preserve the memory of a genuine incident experienced by the Landreth family during their migration to Texas. Over the years, the exact river may have become uncertain, but the image of the wagon saved by a humble feather bed endured. Like many family traditions, it serves as a reminder of the hardships, risks, resourcefulness, and determination that characterized the westward movement of nineteenth-century American families. Whatever the precise circumstances, the story reflects the courage required of Thornton and Elizabeth Landreth as they left Mississippi to build a new life in Comanche County, where their descendants would remain for generations.

Note: Cherry Hill was an early historical settlement and community located in the northeast corner of Calhoun County, Mississippi, near the Skuna River bottoms. The area eventually transitioned and became known as Elzy, but today it is largely an extinct town.

Always keep a horse trough handy

My father, Jay B. Littlefield, liked to tell the following story. One evening, after a day of making soap, and the kettle was removed from the fire in the backyard of the farmhouse, a glowing pile of burning embers remained on the ground. So the kids, I presume my dad and his brother Hood, and Jack Parker, and perhaps some others, decided it would be fun to take turns jumping over the burning pile of embers. Everything went well until one of them - not my dad - jumped short and into the fire. Fortunately, the horse trough stood nearby, and he immediately jumped into the cool water and stayed there for quite a while. What could have been a terrible injury turned out to be almost miraculous and there was no burn, no scar, no redness, nothing. So, my dad always concluded the story with this sage advice: "Always keep a horse trough nearby if your jumpin' over the embers".

Church, Singing, and Community in Amity

The Landreth and Littlefield families grew up in a rural world centered on the farm, the schoolhouse, and the country church. In northeastern Comanche County, Texas, near Amity and Sipe Springs, the church was far more than a place of worship. It served as the social center of the community, bringing together neighbors who might otherwise see one another only occasionally during the busy planting and harvest seasons.

Sunday services, revivals, homecomings, and community singings provided opportunities for families to gather, exchange news, renew friendships, and meet future spouses. Many marriages in rural Texas began through acquaintances made at church events. The congregation formed a social network that connected families across miles of countryside.

One of the most cherished traditions was the annual "church gathering". This reunion continues today with what is called "First Sunday in June". Families arrived with baskets filled with fried chicken, ham, vegetables, pies, cakes, and preserves. Long tables were set up beneath the trees and after the meal the congregation joined together in an afternoon of hymn singing. As my Uncle Bob Lewis (Joy June's husband) fondly recalled, it was "dinner on the ground and singing all around." Music occupied a central place in the life of the community. Long before radio and television, congregational singing was one of the principal forms of recreation and fellowship. Old gospel hymns were known by heart and passed from one generation to the next.

The Amity Church served as the spiritual and social center of the community for many decades. The stone building shown here was the church remembered by later generations, though the earliest congregation likely met in a brush arbor before a permanent structure was erected. Inside were simple wooden benches, a raised platform for the preacher and singers, and a piano that accompanied congregational hymns. There was no air-conditioning, and summer services could be warm, but families gathered faithfully for worship, singing, and fellowship. One custom was the members of the congregation would be asked to take turns leading the people in a particular hymn, perhaps being a favorite of theirs. But there would also be duets, trios, and family groupings. For many families, including the Landreths, the church represented far more than a building—it was the heart of a community and a link between generations.

Rt: the church at Amity in 1955. A simple one-room edifice stoutly built of local stone.

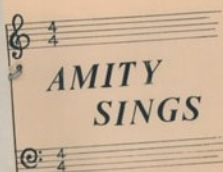


Above is the family organ and I remember pushing the treadle pedals at the farmhouse. The organ stood in the Landreth home for decades, and likely accompanied the songs later collected in Amity Sings. It is not merely a piece of furniture but a surviving witness to family and community worship. If the organ stood in the Thornton Landreth home for decades, it likely accompanied the very songs later collected in Amity Sings. In that sense it is not merely a piece of furniture but a surviving witness to family and community worship.





Ab. Jay B. Littfield at the Amity first Sunday hymn sing.



BOOK OF HYMNS AND SONGS
"AMITY SINGS"

NUMBER	TITLE	COMPOSER
1	Special Prayer	
2	Leading Verse	
3	Steadfast Assurance	
4	How Thou Almighty King	
5	Everybody will be Happy Over There	
6	Jeffering Rule	
7	Like Me the Roman Rose	
8	John W. D. Then Great Jehovah	
9	Leading Light	
10	He is So Precious to Me	
11	He Alone	
12	Higher Ground	
13	For Great Thou Art	
14	I Have Found the Way	
15	Fly Away	
16	I Will Sing the Wondrous Story	
17	Jesus Spoke	
18	Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me	
19	Just a Little While	
20	Just Leave It Alone	
21	Just At the Cross	
22	My Redeemer	
23	My Redeemer's Love	

THESE SONGS REMAINED IMPORTANT TO THE LANDRETH AND LITTLEFIELD FAMILIES FOR MANY YEARS. JOHN BENJAMIN ("J.B. OF JAY B.") LITTLEFIELD LATER COMPILED AND SELF-PUBLISHED TWO HYMNALS CONTAINING MANY OF THE OLD SONGS HE HAD LEARNED IN CHILDHOOD. HE ALSO TAUGHT THEM TO HIS SON, JAMES LANDRETH, HELPING PRESERVE A MUSICAL TRADITION THAT STRETCHED BACK TO THE CHURCHES OF COMANCHE COUNTY. ONE OF LAN'S FAVORITES WAS THE HUMOROUS GOSPEL SONG "I'Z A METHODIST TILL I DIE," WHICH HE SANG IN A SLOWER, MORE TRADITIONAL STYLE THAN MODERN RECORDINGS. JAY B. ALSO SAID THAT ONE NEVER BOUGHT A CAR WITH A RADIO BECAUSE YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO SING IN THE CAR.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOSPEL MUSIC TO THE FAMILY IS REFLECTED IN THE NAME OF JAY B.'S OLDER BROTHER, HOOD CORNELIOUS LITTLEFIELD. BORN IN MAY, TEXAS, ON AUGUST 8, 1908, HE WAS NAMED AFTER TWO WELL-KNOWN LOCAL RELIGIOUS FIGURES OF THE DAY. ACCORDING TO HOOD'S OWN RECOLLECTION, HIS MIDDLE NAME HONORED R. H. CORNELIUS (NOTE DIFFERENCES IN SPELLING) A RESPECTED GOSPEL SINGER AND COMPILER OF POPULAR SONGBOOKS OR HYMNALS. HOOD'S FIRST NAME CAME FROM AN ITINERANT REVIVAL PREACHER NAMED HOOD VINSON, WHO TRAVELED THROUGH THE REGION CONDUCTING REVIVALS. YEARS LATER, HOOD RECALLED MEETING THE PREACHER FOR WHOM HE HAD BEEN NAMED. UPON LEARNING THE BOY'S FULL NAME, THE PREACHER REPORTEDLY REMARKED, "WELL, YOU OUGHT TO MAKE A GOOD FIDDLER." HOOD LAUGHED AS HE TOLD THE STORY DECADES LATER, ADDING, "HE, HOOD, IS STILL FIDDLIN' AROUND."

THE STORY ILLUSTRATES HOW DEEPLY CHURCH LIFE INFLUENCED RURAL FAMILIES IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY TEXAS. CHILDREN WERE OFTEN NAMED AFTER ADMIRER MINISTERS, TEACHERS, OR COMMUNITY LEADERS. IN HOOD'S CASE, HIS VERY NAME PRESERVED THE MEMORY OF THE REVIVAL MEETINGS, GOSPEL SINGING, AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE THAT SHAPED THE LIVES OF THE LANDRETH AND LITTLEFIELD FAMILIES.

AMITY SINGS

1. I will sing the wondrous sto - ry Of the Christ who died for me,
2. I was lost, but Je - sus found me, Found the sheep that went a - stray,
3. I was bruised, but Je - sus healed me, Paint was I from man - y a fall;
4. Days of dark-ness still come o'er me, For- ever's pain I oft - en tread,
5. He will keep me till the riv - er Rolls its wa - ters at my feet;

How He left His home in glo - ry For the crown of Cal - va - ry,
Threw His lov - ing arms a - round me, Drew me back in - to His way,
Right was gone, and fears pos - sessed me, But He freed me from them all,
But the bar - rier still is with me; By His hand I'm safe - ly led,
Then He'll bear me safe - ly o - ver, Where the loved ones I shall meet.

Chorus
Yes, I'll sing the wondrous sto - ry Of the
Christ who died for me, Sing it with the saints in
glo - ry, Gath - ered by the crys - tal sea.

Farm Life and a Changing World in Comanche County

The Landreth farm in northwestern Comanche County stood in what local residents often called the "sandy land" country. The gently rolling landscape around Amity and Sipe Springs was covered with oak timber, small streams, and sandy loam soils that proved well suited to cotton, peanuts, corn, and livestock. Although less fertile than the rich black-land prairies farther east, these soils were easy to cultivate and became the foundation of many successful family farms.

Family tradition holds that Thornton Benjamin Landreth owned approximately a section of land, or about 640 acres. Whether the acreage was exactly a section or somewhat less, the memory suggests that he was a substantial landowner by the standards of his day. The large family home shown above in surviving photographs supports this impression. At a time when many Texas farmers were tenants or sharecroppers, ownership of several hundred acres represented decades of hard work, careful management, and economic success. Like most farms in the region, the Landreth operation was probably diversified. Cotton was the principal cash crop, but farmers also raised corn, oats, sorghum, cattle, hogs, chickens, and eventually peanuts. Diversification provided protection against drought, poor prices, and crop failures. Family labor was essential. Children worked alongside their parents in the fields, gardens, and barns, learning responsibility and farming techniques at an early age.

The generation born to Thornton between 1871 and 1883 grew up in a world powered almost entirely by horses and mules. Fields were plowed behind teams, cotton was picked by hand, and most transportation occurred by wagon. Yet the generation of Thornton's grandchildren, born between 1908 and 1922, witnessed one of the most dramatic periods of technological change in human history. John Benjamin ("Jay B.") Littlefield, born in 1910, son of Thornton's youngest child, Ada Landreth, often recalled aspects of this transformation. During his lifetime, rural America moved from the nineteenth century into the modern age.

Jay B. Littlefield belonged to what Tom Brokaw later called 'The Greatest Generation.' Yet his lifetime encompassed remarkable changes even though they lived through the Great Depression and World War II. I think that this term encompasses these greater events.

As a child he saw horse-drawn agriculture and steam-powered machinery. As an adult he experienced tractors, automobiles, electricity, telephones, radios, refrigeration, paved roads, airplanes, and eventually television. Few generations have witnessed such sweeping changes within a single lifetime.

One of Jay B.'s vivid memories was the arrival of the steam-powered threshing machine. Before mechanized harvesting, separating grain from straw required enormous amounts of labor. The arrival of a steam threshing outfit was therefore a major event. Powered by a large traction engine, the machine traveled from farm to farm during harvest season. Neighbors gathered to help with the work, and entire families participated. Meals were shared, news was exchanged, and friendships were renewed. The machine threshing of the grain was both a labor-saving innovation and an important social occasion that strengthened community ties.

In later years, steam threshers gave way to smaller gasoline-powered tractors owned by individual farmers. This shift reflected a broader transformation occurring throughout rural America. Mechanization reduced the need for labor and increased productivity, but it also changed the character of farm life and gradually weakened some of the cooperative traditions that had united earlier generations.

Not all of Thornton's descendants remained on the land. As the family grew, the farm could not support every child and grandchild. Some inherited the land, while others pursued opportunities elsewhere. One son, Ben, became a saddle and harness maker before adapting to the automobile age by operating a gasoline station. Ada Elizabeth Landreth, Jay B.'s mother, married a young man, Jesse Littlefield, from nearby Sipe Springs. Like many rural Texans seeking new opportunities, they eventually migrated to California, joining a movement that would carry thousands of Texas families westward during the twentieth century. Yet wherever they lived, the memories of the farm remained. The sandy fields, cotton harvests, church gatherings, community singings, and threshing crews formed the backdrop of a way of life that connected the Landreth and Littlefield families for generations. Through family stories, photographs, and songs,



Landreth Family about 1883.

Left to right: Bob, Grandma Elizabeth Powel Landreth, John, Grandpa Thornton Benjamin Landreth holding Ada, Ben, and Alta Landreth. Note: John and Ben were twins.

Family portrait likely taken in Comanche County, Texas in approximately 1883.



Landreth Family Portrait,
probably about 1891.

Pictured left to right: Bob Landreth,
Grandpa (T.B.), Ben, Ada, Alta,
Grandma Eliza holding Jack Parker,
and John.



Landreth Family Portrait, 1906 in Rising Star, Tx

Back row, L to R. Robert/Bob and Lillie Landreth, Jesse and Ada Littlefield, John and Mollie Landreth
 Front row: Percy Parker (son of Alto, not pictured), Thronton Benjamin (Thornty) and Eliz. Landreth, Ray Landreth,
 Ben Landreth, Elizabeth (Bess) Landreth.

Note: Ray and Bess are children of Ben. Ben and John were twins; not pictured Mollie Smith, wife of Ben.

On reverse of picture noted: Percy Parker Christmas, 1906 in Rising Star

Thornton Benjamin Landreth

The story of Thornton Benjamin Landreth reflects the westward march of an American family over generations. Family tradition places the Landreths in the Scottish Border country, perhaps near Hume in Berwickshire. By the late eighteenth century, Thomas Samuel Landreth had settled in Virginia, where he was buried in 1800. His descendants moved steadily south and west—through North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Alabama—following the opportunities of a growing nation. Born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, in 1850, Thornton Benjamin Landreth eventually brought his family to Comanche County, Texas, where he spent the greater part of his adult life. His journey marked the final stage of a migration that had carried the Landreth family from the British Isles across the American frontier.

Thornton Benjamin Landreth was born about 1850, most likely in Alabama, although some later records give Mississippi as his birthplace. Family records and online genealogies frequently identify Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, while his death certificate—provided by his son Robert A. Landreth—lists Mississippi. The uncertainty reflects the mobility of nineteenth-century farming families, who often moved between neighboring states and whose records were not always consistent. By 1870 the family was associated with Comanche County, Texas.

After arriving in Comanche County in the early 1870s, Thornton and Eliza entered a region that was only beginning to recover from the Civil War era. Their first home was almost certainly a modest frontier dwelling, later replaced by the larger Victorian farmhouse that appears elsewhere in the album. Over the following decades, careful farming enabled the family to acquire land, raise five children, and establish one of the better-known farms in the Amity community.

Family tradition consistently portrays Thornton as a hardworking farmer whose life revolved around the land, the church, and his family. Unlike many pioneers whose descendants soon dispersed, Thornton remained on the same homestead for approximately sixty-five years. His long residence made him a familiar figure in the Amity community and a living link between frontier Texas and the modern twentieth century.

When Thornton was born, Texas was still an independent frontier in the American imagination. By the time of his death in 1941 he had witnessed Reconstruction, barbed wire, railroads, automobiles, electricity, telephones, radio, and the opening years of World War II. Few lives span such dramatic change.



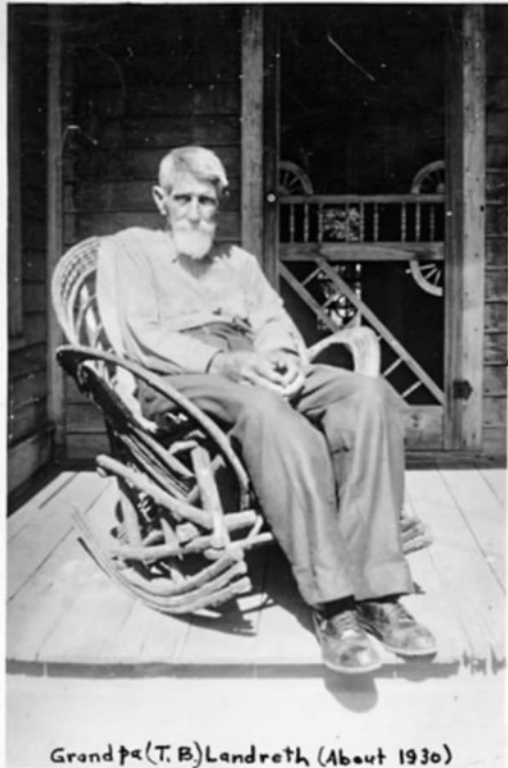
Elizabeth and Thornton Landreth

Elizabeth Powell and Thornton Benjamin Landreth were both born in 1850. Elizabeth was born in Georgia; Thornton was most likely born in Alabama, although some records suggest Mississippi.

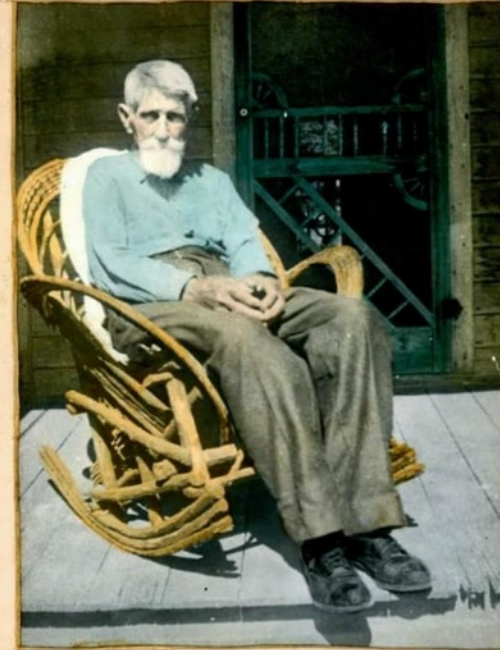
Eliza's father was a Baptist minister. Thus, they settled into a Baptist community called "Amity" in northwest Comanche County, Texas. see below.

Family tradition, preserved by Hood C. Littlefield, recalls that Thornton's mother hid him at age 14 during the closing months of the Civil War for fear he might be impressed into Confederate service while still a young teenager.

Thornton's uncle, Alfred C. Landreth (b. Tuscaloosa, AL 1844), from Cherry Hill, MS, had enlisted at age 18 in the CSA at Beuela, MS in 1862, and had already been killed 6 Sept. 1862 near Richmond, VA. He was a member of Company G, Capt. Gaston's 42nd Rifle Regiment, Mississippi Infantry, CSA



Grandpa (T.B.) Landreth (About 1930)
On Front porch of his home. Amity, Comanche, Tex.
(He never left his home Apr. 1876 -



GRANDPA LANDRETH

Grandpa Thornton (Thornty) Benjamin Landreth, in his rustic rocking chair, likely made from hickory and oak saplings, on the front porch of the family homestead in Comanche, Co. Tx. Who colorized the photo is uncertain. T.B. born 21 July 1850/2 in Tuscaloosa, AL, so he is about 80 years old. He was somewhat short and weighed 140 lbs. He was a farmer all his life. He died 8 Nov. 1941 and is buried at the Amity Cemetery,



Thornton Benjamin Landreth



Several additional photographs of Thornton Benjamin Landreth have survived outside the original family album. Although they lack the provenance of the album photographs, they help illustrate his appearance during later life and confirm the remarkable consistency of his features over several decades.

These images from the Web, not the LFA. These images reveal Thornton in less formal attire and one in a more formal setting. Center is the tombstone from the Amity Cemetery.

Thornton Benjamin Landreth: some history

Thornton Benjamin Landreth was born 21 July 1850 in Tuscaloosa, AL to Benjamin Franklin Landreth and Elizabeth Petty Pool. He had 4 siblings: Francis, Martha, Alford, Robert. The family moved from Alabama to Cherry Hill, in Calhoun County, Mississippi between 1850 and 1860. Cherry Hill was an early unincorporated farming settlement in the northeast corner of Calhoun County, near the Skuna River. While it was once an active post-Civil War community, it has largely vanished. Thornton was the youngest child.

Thornton married Elizabeth A. Powell in 1870. It should be noted that her father was a Baptist minister and thus the strong connection to the Baptist community in Amity.

Their first child Alto Roberta was born in Mississippi in 1871. The couple then began moving westward, living in Arkansas in the mid-1870s where their twin sons John Thomas and Benjamin Franklin were born in 1874. The location is unknown.

They moved on to Texas and settled in Comanche County, in the Amity Community where Thornton purchased a section of land, assumed to be 640 acres. Amity was essentially a small church meeting hall and a small school. It is now almost gone except for the cemetery, which is where Thornton is buried, along with many of his family.

There, their son Robert Alexander was born in 1871 on the "place" as was they youngest girl, Ada Elilizabeth, born in 1883.

As can be seen in the photos of their house, shown above, he must have been a successful farmer. He settled in Comanche County during a favorable period after the Civil War because the frontier conflicts had ceased, railroad expanded into Central Texas, cotton markets were strong (especially before World War I) and land values steadily increased. Successful farming depended heavily on family labor, and hence the five children (and one grandchild, Jack Parker) were part of the reason for the family's success. In addition, that country was called "sandy-land" country and peanuts became an important cash crop in the early twentieth century.

His wife, Eliza Elizabeth, died in 1924 and he died in 1941. Both are buried in the Amity Cemetery (see grave marker).

T. B. LANDRETH CLAIMED BY DEATH AT AGE OF 91

T. B. Landreth, for more than 60 years a resident of the Amity community a few miles southeast of town, passed away at his home Saturday night at the age of 91, after having been ill only a short time. Mr. Landreth had enjoyed unusually good health for a man of his age and until a few months ago was in town frequently, attending to business and meeting friends.

Mr. Landreth was preceded in death by his wife about 17 years ago, but is survived by two sons and one daughter, Robert and John, who reside in the Amity community and Mrs. Jess Littlefield of Imperial, California. On account of the great distance Mrs. Littlefield was unable to be present for the funeral.

Mr. Landreth had been a member of the Amity Baptist church for many years and was recognized as one of the leading citizens of his community.

Funeral services were held at the Amity church Monday in charge of the pastor, Rev. Mr. Smith, assisted by the Rev. Mr. Sargon, of Sennet, Texas. Interment was made in the Amity cemetery.

Here begin the photographs from the
Landreth Family Album

Note: those images from the original are placed together here, although not in the same order in which they appeared in the album but grouped by generation and family and roughly in order of their birth. That is, for Benjamin Thornton and Eliza Elizabeth's children: Alto, Benjamin, John, Robert and Ada.

Most small towns at that time seemed to have a local photographic studio. It was also the family's tradition to have a family studio portrait taken and to particularly to record their children after they had survived infancy. These were printed on photo-paper and attached to firm stock and were called "cabinet-cards". Some were often collected into a photographic album. However, over time, these collections were lost or destroyed or more commonly the images were never identified and so, not knowing the subjects in the photographs, they were disposed of.

This one survived through the efforts of Jay B. Littlefield and Hood C. Littlefield.



Alto Roberta Landreth, age 20.
Portrait taken in Brownwood, Texas in 1892.



Alto R. Landreth Johnson with Manon M. Johnson
(1899 - 197) and Percy P. (Jack) Parker



Jack Parker, born in 1890.
Portrait taken in Brownwood, Texas.

J

After about six months in Washington, Jack moved back to Texas and lived with Uncle Hood's grandparents, where he worked as a hired hand but was also treated like an adopted son. Uncle Hood notes he hated the name

Percy because of the teasing from his schoolmates, so he was "Jack". He was born 10 May, 1890 in May, Brown Co. to Thomas and Alto.

The town in Washington where Jack lived is now under the Columbia River because of the Grand Cooley Dam.

Jack Parker

Portrait taken in Rising Star, Texas.

In his youth he left home to go to Washington state to pick fruit, likely in the Okanogon while the family remained in Texas. He said that he would send box a box of fruit to them. Versions of this story say cherries some say apples. But when the fruit arrived it was all rotten and the family was very disappointed. Hood notes Jack only stayed there about six months.

As noted, Jack Parker, went to the Northwest to pick fruit (this is what Uncle Hood said of his nephew, "He was a fruit tramp".) to make a living, leaving his mom Alto on the family farm. When Jack returned, Tom Parker and Alto divorced and Alto and Jack stayed on the family farm. Alto then married Tom Johnson and likely moved to Brownwood. (see below, Manon and Edna Gill) That left Jack on the farm with his grandfather Thornton. "Thornty" then became a surrogate parent for his grandson and Jack worked on the farm for many years as a "hired-hand". Although 20 years younger than his step-brothers, Hood and Jay B., they became quite close and Hood notes they played baseball and other games together.



Thomas Frank Parker and Alto Roberta. Alto is the oldest of Thornton and Elizabeth children. She is Ada's sister. Alto was born 1871 in Mississippi. This is likely a wedding portrait.

They had one child, Percy Preston "Jack" Parker, see next page.

Frank Parker was Alta Landreth's first husband.

Alta later married Tom Johnson (1869 - 1957) and they had three children, one of whom died by age 10. The other two were Manon Marguerite Johnson (b. 1900) later m. Olaf Gill and Edna Johnson (b. 1901) later m. xxx Vaughn.



Alto Landreth and Frank Parker, probably on or near the occasion of their marriage, circa 1888–1895. The portrait was taken in a professional Central Texas studio, where painted backdrops, decorative screens, potted plants, and patterned carpets created an atmosphere of refinement far removed from the realities of frontier farm life. The groom's bowler hat and boutonniere, together with Alto's white dress and floral headpiece, suggest this may have been a wedding portrait marking the beginning of their life together.

The picture opposite and here are obviously taken in the same sitting. The background is the same and the man is the same. The picture to the left appears that Alto is in her wedding dress. On the right her trousseau has changed but her hairstyle is quite similar. Although marked as unknown by Uncle Hood, it's got to be on their wedding day or soon thereafter.





Ben and John Landreth
(twins)
Ben (1874 - 1938)
John (1874 - 1943)

Ben and John Landreth, age 12 or 14, taken in Brownwood, Texas.

Ben and John were twins. Ben and one of his friends had a harness shop in Rising Star, which they later turned into a service station. John was a farmer. Lan Littlefield's father, John Benjamin, was named after Ben and John, his uncles.



Ben Landreth (front row, second from left)
and John Landreth (front row, far right).
Other subjects unknown.
Portrait taken in Mason, Texas.



Left: John Landreth. Portrait taken in Brownwood, Texas. Born in Little Rock. Lived on the northwest corner of his grandparents' 200-acre property. Occupation: farmer



John Thornton, a little later in life

John Thornton Landreth (1874 - 1943)

John Thornton married Eula May Beard (1882 - 1919) inss. They had five children: Bonnie May, Lilly Belle, Johnnie Ray (m), Ruby Alice and Evelyn Marie.



Ruby Alice



**Lillie Belle, Ruby, and Evelyn, children of Robert
and Eula May Landreth**



Ruby and Evelyn



Benjamin Franklin Landreth and Mollie, his wife



Ben Landreth. Portrait taken in
Brownwood, Texas.

Occupation: farmer, then manager
gas station



Mollie (Smith) Landreth, wife of Ben Landreth



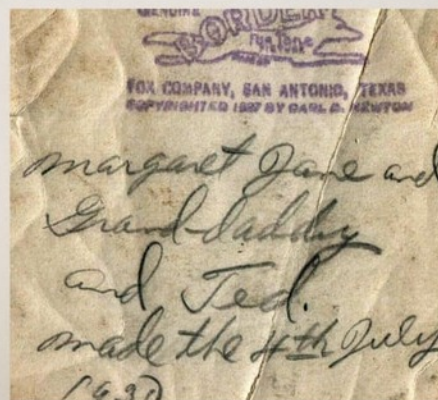
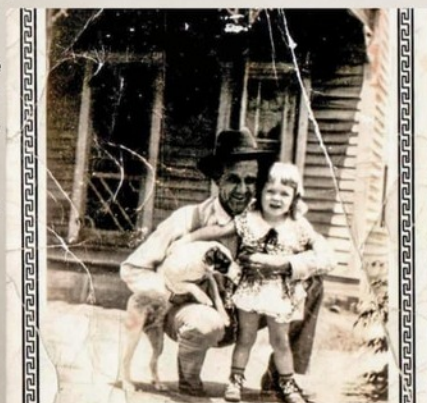
Geroge Smith, brother of
Mollie Smith Landreth

Ray and Bess
(George Ray and
Bess Margaret),
children of
Benjamin
Franklin and
Mary Elizabeth
(Mollie)
Landreth, taken
in Rising Star, TX



Bess Margaret
(called Bess) and
(George) Ray
Landreth
children of Ben
Landreth and Mary
Elizabeth Smith,
called Mollie. She
had three other
children all of
whom died in
infancy, Lola, Earl
and Billie Jean.
Portrait taken in
Rising Star.

Margaret Jane
Landreth with
Benjamin L.. She
is the daughter
of (George) Ray,
above.
She is the
daughter of Ray
Landreth of
Dallas, TX.
M.J.L.
19 Feb 1928
16 Oct 2022



Picture is annotated,
probably by J.B.
Littelfield.
Margaret Jane
(Landreth) called
Maggie, daughter of
George Ray and
Irene, with
Ted the dog.
Made the 4th of July
1930 probably at the
farmhouse.

Robert Alexander Landreth



Robert Alexander Landreth
born Texas, Occupation: Farmer



Bob Landreth. Portrait taken in Rising Star, Texas.



Above: Lilly Landreth (Beard) holding daughter Naomi. Lilly is Bob Landreth's wife. Naomi later married Aston Sartain,



Both child portraits: Naomi Landreth, daughter of Bob Landreth and Lilly Landreth (Beard)



left: portrait Naomi as young girl. not from LFA. kindness of her son, Dr. Robert Sartain

Ada Elizabeth Landreth



Robert A. and Ada Elizabeth. Portrait taken in Brownwood, Texas.



Ada Elizabeth Landreth: Thornton and Eliza's youngest child, born in 1883 on the farm in Amity. Portrait of Ada taken in Rising Star, Texas by R.A. Watkins studio, same studio as picture of Manon, below.



J. M. (Jesse Morris) & Ada E. Eliza Landreth Littlefield 1906

Jesse Morris Littlefield and Ada Eliz. Landreth
Probably wedding photo 1906.

Comparison to the photo at right reflects nearly
50 years together



Ada & J. M. Littlefield
Sept. 3, 1955

Photo annotated by their son, Jay B. Littlefield. Probably taken at the ranch of their daughter, Ima Lou, near Brownwood, Texas, on September 3, 1955. Ada was 72 years old. Her right hand exhibits the characteristic deformities of longstanding rheumatoid arthritis ("rheumatoid hand"), including flexion contractures. Two of their children, Hood and Joy June, also developed rheumatoid arthritis. I am not aware of any other members of the Landreth family who were affected.



Hood C. taken in Rising Star
1908 - 2000



Jay B, born 1910.
James Landreth Littlefield's father.
1910 - 1991



Hood with Jay



Ima Lou Littlefield, born 1914 in Fort Worth, TX



Ima Lou Littlefield (Nabers)
1914 - 1993



Joy June
1920 - 1989



Joy June (1920) and
Billie Wayne (1922 - 2010)



Ima Lou and Henry Ford Littlefield

left: Henry Ford Littlefield (born August 9, 1917, (probably taken in a nearby town, possible Sipe Springs) and Ima Lou Littlefield Nabers (born 1915). (Exact birthplace not confirmed as yet).

Ford died age 2 on 4 Oct. 1918 as a young child in Imperial, CA and is buried in El Centro, CA; the location of the grave marker is unknown due to a fire in the cemetery office that destroyed all records and maps. Ford's mother, Ada was deeply affected by his death for the rest of her life.



Joy June Littlefield and Henry Ford

Henry Ford Littlefield was named after the car manufacturer. Uncle Hood said that they had purchased a new Ford car just before Ford was born. He was called Ford, never Henry. He died as a child after the family moved from Texas to Imperial City, CA. Given dates noted above, they must have moved to California between 1915 and 1917. Jay B. Littlefield recalled that Ford became ill after eating grapes the skin on. The term given to Ford's condition at that time was "bloody flux". This is a form of infantile diarrhea caused by bacteria, commonly *Shigella*. It is possible that Ford's death was related to eating grapes but other sources of infection are also possible. For the rest of his life, Jay B. would never eat grapes with the skin on.



The Powell Brothers
left: Sam Powell, one of the brothers of Eliza
Powell Landreth (Grandmother) and also Ben
Powell, Emilus Powell, and possibly one additional
sibling. Portrait taken in Nashville.



above Ben Powell. Portrait taken in
Waco, Texas.



Manon M. Johnson

Although identified as Mae Henry but is felt more likely to be Manon M. Johnson daughter of Alto and Tom Johnson (b. 1900 or 12/15/1889). She later married Olaf Milton Gill on 3/21/36.

They had a son Thomas Olaf Gill (b. 8/14/1927, d. 11/29/2006) called "Ike". Ike married Jo Ann and they had two children Susan Marguerite Gill and Davis Thomas Gill.



Neighbors of the Landreths



This space reserved for future photos as they become available.

Dee Morgan, Oma's brother. He was born 1882. The Morgans were likely neighbors of the Landreths. Dee's parents were John W. and Nancy Morgan. His sister was Oma Morgan and he had four other siblings. Both families appear in the 1900 US Census for Justice Precinct 6, but 7 census sheets apart, hence not likely next-door neighbors. Oma was born in 1888. Hence, Dee was contemporaneous with Ada Elizabeth, but younger than the Landreth boys.



Beulah Richardson, a local neighbor from the Rattlesnake Gap. Portrait taken in Brownwood, Texas.



Ed Richardson, local neighbor and husband of Beulah Richardson. Portrait taken in Comanche, Texas. Ed and Beulah had two sons, Eugene and Weldon. Hood C. Littlefield went to school with one of Ed's sons one year and Hood played ball with



George and Willie Laughter.



Britton Laughter, son of Willie Laughter

Willie Maurine Laughter (yes, that's her name) was the daughter of John H. Powell, was born 1/15/1872 in Slate Springs, MS and died 9/3/1959 in Corpus Christi, TX. Mother's maiden name was Therrell. Buried Edna, TX. Available evidence suggests that Willie Maurine Laughter was probably a sister of Eliza Elizabeth Powell Landreth.

Closing Reflections

The history of the Landreth family can be viewed as part of a much larger story that shaped both Europe and America for centuries. In farming societies, land was the principal source of wealth and security. As families grew larger, an important question arose: how could a farm support multiple sons and their future families? In some parts of Europe, particularly England, the custom of primogeniture allowed the eldest son to inherit most or all of the family estate, keeping farms intact from one generation to the next. Younger sons often had to seek their fortunes elsewhere. In other regions, land was divided among all heirs, gradually reducing farms into smaller and less productive parcels. Either system created pressure for migration, and many Europeans looked to North America as a place where land was abundant and ownership was within reach.

This pattern continued throughout American history. As each frontier filled, a new one opened farther west. Families moved from the Atlantic colonies into Kentucky and Tennessee, then onward to Arkansas, Texas, California, and beyond. The attraction was not simply adventure but the opportunity to acquire land, establish a farm, and provide for a growing family. Historians have often described the American frontier as a "safety valve" that relieved the pressures of population growth and limited land availability in older settled regions. The experience of Thornton and Eliza Landreth fits naturally within this broader historical movement. When they settled in Comanche County, Texas, during the late nineteenth century, the area was still part of a relatively new agricultural frontier. Land was communities were forming, and families could build farms of their own. Over time, however, the Landreth family prospered and expanded. Children married, grandchildren arrived, and several related households came to occupy the same general area around Amity. The circumstances that had attracted Thornton's generation began to change. The amount of productive land remained fixed, while the number of family members who depended upon it continued to grow.

By the early twentieth century, younger families faced a different reality than that experienced by the original settlers. Even where family relationships remained close and land ownership was stable, there was often not enough acreage to provide independent farms for every son or daughter who wished to remain nearby. Periodic droughts and uncertain crop yields added further challenges. Under these conditions, migration became a practical and familiar solution. Families looked elsewhere for opportunities that no longer existed at home. Seen in this light, the move of Jesse M. Littlefield and Ada E. Landreth from Comanche County to California was not an isolated event but part of a long historical pattern. California's Imperial Valley represented a new agricultural frontier, much as Comanche County had for Thornton's generation several decades earlier. Irrigation projects drawing water from the Colorado River transformed desert land into productive farms and attracted settlers from across the Southwest. The decision to leave Texas may have been influenced by drought, economic opportunity, family circumstances, or a combination of all three. Whatever the reasons, their move reflected a recurring theme in American history: when one frontier became crowded or offered limited prospects, families sought opportunity on the next.

The story came full circle in the following generation. Members of the family (Jesse and his son J.B.) later worked on the All-American Canal, one of the great engineering projects of the American West. In a sense, the family that had once relied upon rainfall and dry-land farming in Comanche County became part of the effort to bring reliable irrigation water to California's desert farms. Their experiences illustrate a broader American story of migration, adaptation, and the continual search for land and opportunity for the next generation. However, it is curious that after their migration to California, that most of them returned to Texas and to Brown County, but not to the farm. And most of them returned to the land, being ranchers or bee-keepers. One might say,, the acorn doesn't fall far from the tree.

This volume is offered to future generations in the hope that they will know not only the names of their ancestors, but something of their lives, the places they lived, the work they performed, and the values they passed on.



About The Author/Editor James Landreth Littlefield

When Jim or Lan - as you may know him - was born, a name was needed to fill in the birth certificate. He was going to be called by his two grandfathers, which would have been Jesse James Littlefield (Jesse M. Littlefield and James J. Walsh). Given that this might have led to a life of robbing banks in Missouri, a change was felt appropriate. SO, substituted for the Jesse was Landreth, the familial/surname/maiden name of Jim's father's (Jay B. Littlefield) mother, Ada Landreth. Since the name Landreth was about to disappear due to a vanishing of male heirs, he was christened James Landreth Littlefield. But, there were so many James in his mother's family, he was to be called by his middle name, "Landreth", but this being somewhat cumbersome, it was shortened to "Lan" and Lan became the familiar/diminutive form, "Lannie". As to why it appears as the feminine from "-ie", rather than "Lanny" is not known. Hence, if you hear someone call him "Lannie" you know this is likely a very old friend (before 1958) or a family member or elementary school mate. Otherwise, you will hear "Jim". And so, when it came time to give a name to "Lan's" son, his parents Aleda and Jim/Lan chose Mark Landreth.

This provides to the reader a partial explanation of why I chose to put together this volume of pictures and stories and vignettes of the times and places of those pictured herein. Not only was the intent to provide the background for my name and that of my son, but to understand our origins. Since my father was born at the family "place", many if not most of the stories of his early years came from there and I wanted them to be remembered. These stories and people were mostly from the Landreth family and less so from the Littlefield side. These are deferred to another

Abv. Jay B. Littlefield with his father, Jesse Morris Littlefield, at train station 1943, probably at Waco, TX. J.B. was likely on leave from the New Orleans Navy Yard, where he spent two years of service. His wife, Kathleen Walsh Littlefield was to join him in New Orleans for the duration.

Lft. Lan with his grandmother, Ada Elizabeth Landreth taken at her home, 4005 Austin Ave. in Brownwood, TX. He was two years old.

Blw. Lan in Thornton Landreth's chair at the old homestead near Amity. Note the sailor's hat, as his father, Jay B had a small collection of such. Take abt. 1950.

Note: Annotations made by J.B.L.

Comment: Jesse and Ada had returned to living in Brownwood, TX. from living in Imperial, CA sometime in the 1940s. In Brownwood, Jesse built a pre-constructed or pre-fab house from Sears and Roebuck at 4005 Austin Ave. in Brownwood, which is 28 miles from Amity in Comanche County.



The Parting Glass a final reflection

Every family possesses photographs.

Far fewer preserve the stories that give those photographs meaning.

Across America, countless family albums lie forgotten in attics, closets, antique stores, and estate sales. Their pages contain weddings, babies, soldiers, farmers, grandparents, and children whose names have long since been forgotten. Once the generation that recognized the faces is gone, the photographs often become little more than anonymous portraits. The people remain, but their identities—and with them their stories—are lost.

The Landreth Family Album escaped that fate. For more than a century it passed from one generation to the next. Uncle Hood Cornelius Littlefield remembered the names and relationships of the people in its pages and recorded many of their stories in conversations with the author. Jay B. Littlefield carefully preserved the album, annotated photographs, saved family papers, and added his own recollections. Brittany Frye later undertook the painstaking work of removing, digitizing, restoring, organizing, and preserving the photographs while associating them with Hood's identifications. Other descendants contributed memories, documents, and photographs that helped complete the story.

The album itself is an historical artifact. It preserves not only portraits of one family, but also a record of changing photography, clothing, studio practices, rural life, migration, farming, church life, and the ordinary experiences that shaped generations of Americans. The photographs span the transition from the nineteenth-century frontier into the modern world.

This book represents an attempt to preserve not merely names and dates, but lives. The photographs are the original historical documents. The accompanying text simply provides the context that allows modern readers to recognize the people behind the faces. Every generation inherits two responsibilities: to remember and to be remembered. This volume is offered in fulfillment of the first. Every family leaves something behind. Some leave fortunes, others monuments, and many leave only a few photographs in a worn album whose names have long since been forgotten. The Landreth family was fortunate. They left photographs, letters, stories, hymns, memories, and people who cared enough to preserve them. If this volume has accomplished anything, it is simply to place those scattered pieces back together so that future generations may know not only who these people were, but something of how they lived, what they believed, what they sang, and why they mattered. As with the old Scottish parting song, we raise one final glass—not in farewell alone, but in gratitude.

"The people in these photographs never knew us, but they expected us."

Resources and References

My interview with Hood C. Littlefield (mid-1990s)

Landreth Family Album (original)

Other photo albums from Jay B. Littlefield including photos taken by Joy June (Landreth) Lewis, the family photographer in the 40s and 50s.

Family Bible inscribed by Ada E. (Landreth) Littlefield

Federal Census data (thru Ancestry.com)

Texas Birth and Death Certificates; Mississippi records

Web resources: Ancestry.com; Chatgpt.com; Google.com; Newspapers.com; Find a Grave: www.findagrave.com

Eugene Landreth's "Forebears and Descendants of Landreth Pioneers"

The real Brittany Frye for archival manipulation, digitization and associating the pictures with Hood C.'s descriptions and identifications

Robert Alan Lewis, son of Bob Lewis and Joy June Littlefield Lewis. Robert Lee Sartain, son of Naomi Landreth Sartain.

Oral family tradition and my own recollection of stories and anecdotes from family members

