

Jared Ellison Groce I d. 1803
And His Wife
Sarah Sheppard Groce

By
Sarah Groce Berlet

Copied from paper written in 1937
To be read to the descendants
at the Family reunion at Linds

- Margaret N. Harper - married
1st Mr. Tate, 2nd Maj. Ruffin, and
3rd Col. Thos. White.

5- Martha. (died unmarried)

6- Jared Ellison Harper (died in infancy)

7- James Nairne Harper, born Apr. 18, 1807
in Lincoln Co. Ga. died in Winter
City Miss. Sep. 1892 - married 1828

Wagon Susannah James
m. 2nd 1861, Miss Eudelia Fisher -
m. 3rd in 1874, Mrs. Margaret Coxe,

Record of Sarah Sheppard Harper
daugh. of Rolt. Harper and Lucy Grace
married Henry Kirby of Ga. and had
issue,

1- Jared Ellison Kirby (came to Texas
and settled in Waller Co -
married 1st India Tate (his cousin)
" 2nd Caroline E. Holt
" 3rd Helen Marr Swearingen
in 1855 -

2- Elizabeth Kirby, m. Col. Thos. White,
Issue Joe, Jared + Lucius.

3- Lucinda Kirby - married Mr.
Calhoun, a nephew of
John L. Calhoun.

Jared Ellison Kirby, lived in
Waller Co. Texas, near the home of
his cousin Leonard Waller Groce.
His home "Alta Vista", was sold
by his heirs to the State, and is
now "Prairie View Normal, (school
for negroes)

He had by his first wife, India Tate,
the following children.

1. Jared Ellison Kirby - died un. married,

2. Lucy, married Capt. J. C. Palston.

(Mr. Palston of Waller (Eye, ear and
nose specialist) is their son.

Jared Ellison Kirby and his 2nd wife
Caroline E. Holt, had no children.

By his 3rd wife, he had the following.

1. Richard Kirby, died unmarried,

2. Robert Harper Kirby - married and
lives in Austin Tex, a widely
known Texas prohibition and
temperance worker.

The inhabitants of Nacogdoches cautioned Colonel Groce to look out for the Indians, which were considered bold and treacherous, but the Colonel had already prepared for such an emergency for he had learned much from his experiences in Alabama. Billy Weatherford (Red Eagle) son of the Chaclaw Chief, had headed several insurrections in Alabama, and a bloody massacre had taken place near the Groce home which was called Fort Groce, being fortified against the Indians, and proved a haven for the near by planters on the Alabama River.

Because of their delay at Alexandria, the Groce caravan did not reach their destination until the first week in January 1822. Colonel Groce selected a beautiful site for their future home, a high bluff on the East side of the Brazos, amidst a grove of Walnut trees. (For description see Life of Jared Ellison Groce).

As soon as the Colonel was comfortably settled in his one room house, and he thought that Leonard had rested sufficiently from the long trip, he told him that he must return to the States to finish his education. Leonard had found this wild life very fascinating, and was loath to leave, but his father's word was law. He preferred to return to Alabama, where he had spent most of his boy hood, and had many friends in College at Montgomery, but his father wished him to be near the younger children, who had been with their aunt, Mrs. Lucy Groce Harper, in Georgia, since the death of their mother. So again following the path of duty (which became a habit in his life) Leonard returned to Augusta Georgia, accompanied only by his servant, Fielding, and for the next three years boarded in the home of his cousin, Mrs. Sarah Harper Kirby, wife of Henry Kirby (I) and studied his Greek and Latin at the Academy, spending his week ends with his little brothers in the country. His sister, Sarah, was in boarding school in Nashville, Tennessee.

In 1825, Leonard Groce returned to Texas. His father gave him several commissions to attend to in New Orleans, which he carried out successfully. Although only a few months past eighteen, he began to relieve his father of much of the business pertaining to the plantations. He attended to the shipment of the cotton, and was sent to New Orleans upon several occasions to sell the cotton and bring back supplies, and the continued ill health of his father, caused him to assume great responsibilities at an early age. Passing through Alexandria on his way to Texas, he found many changes. Mrs. Fulton had married Thomas Hooper, and little Courtney had grown several inches taller. The whole family were interested in the Colonization of Texas. Mr. Hooper had visited Colonel Groce in the fall,

(I) After the death of Mr. Kirby, his wife and children came to Texas and lived near the Groce family, Her son, Jared Ellison Kirby, built Alta Vista, which his heirs sold to the State and is now Prairie View Normal, (school for negroes).

and wrote to Stephen F. Austin, on May 9, 1825, I shall be out with young Groce, when he returns the latter part of this month etc. (Austin Papers) Samuel Fulton and his brother-in-law, Russel Mc. Waters also anticipated a trip to Texas. (II) But Leonard did not return in May, for he had to return to New Orleans to purchase machinery for a cotton gin, which was shipped on a schooner to the mouth of the Brazos River.

Many changes had taken place in the three years since Leonard Groce first came to Texas. Although the Colonist had passed through two years of drought, they were a determined class of people, and pressed on, converting a wilderness into well tilled fields, and several small towns had sprung up along the Brazos River. Austin had established his Capitol, San Felipe de Austin, on the West bank of the Brazos, twenty miles below Bernardo, which latter place had gone through such a transformation, he did not recognize it. His father was now living in a house of six rooms, a story and a half high, built of cotton wood logs, hewn and couter hewn, and so closely fitted together, it hardly resembled a log house. Near by was the first house, built in 1822, for the Colonel, which he called Bachelor's Hall. In the rear, was a large kitchen, a dairy, and a house for the Commissary called the Store Room, and houses for the house servants, besides a house for the Doctor, who was employed by the year to look after the health of the negroes, there were stables and barns, and about a half or three quarters of a mile south of the main dwelling, were the negro quarters, built around a lake of clear water. It was a village of log houses, for at that time there was no saw mill in Texas, but among the slaves were several brick masons, and bricks were made on the plantation for cisterns, wells, walks, etc. As he stood on the broad gallery he could see green fields of waving corn and acres upon acre white with cotton ready to be picked. Their expectations had been more than fulfilled, for it was indeed "A land of promise."

Colonel Groce was confined to his bed much of the time, and when his daughter, Sarah, graduated from a young ladies Seminary in New York in 1827, he sent Leonard (aged twenty) to bring his seventeen year old sister home. He felt proud of this trust, and traveling by boat and stage the long journey was accomplished without mishap.

In 1829, Leonard Waller Groce was elected a lieutenant under Captain Abner Huykendall, in the First Company of the militia of the municipality of Austin, organized March 21, 1829. These young officers took the oath on April 4, 1829, as follows: You solemnly swear in the presence of God, to use the arms the country places in your hands in defence of her independence, of the Constitution of the Republic and that of the State. (minutes of the Ayuntamiento of San Felipe de Austin).

In 1830, his brother Jared Ellison Groce, Jr., came out to Texas. He was eighteen years of age, and received from his father his share of the estate, consisting of lands and negroes. Leonard and Jared Jr. did not divide their property until the latter's marriage in 1837. They formed a partnership with Thomas McKinney; Leonard kept up and

Waller Co History by
Frank & White

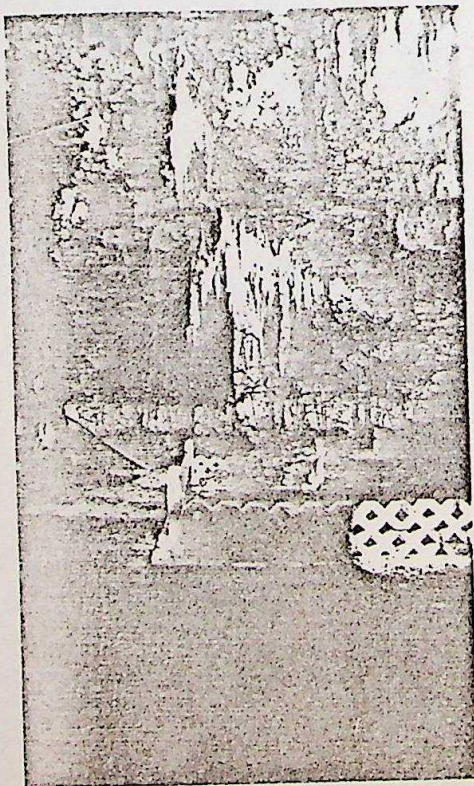
Col. Jared E. Kirby 78

thicket now, but depressions in the ground still mark many of the graves of those who wished to be buried near their master. It is said that some of the old slave negroes that are still living on the plantation have requested that they be buried here.

James F. Pattison had five boys and one girl, and unlike the descendants of many of the early pioneers, who have scattered over a wide area, most of his direct descendants still live within a short radius of the town that bears his name, and they have played an important part in the history of the development of Waller County. Among them are Guy, E. F., and Jim Pattison.

No definite conclusion can be arrived at concerning the treatment of slaves on the several plantations in Waller County. Indeed there were wide variations in the relationship between master and slave. The writer interviewed several old ex-slaves whose memories seemed to be remarkable. Although it would be unwise to draw too many conclusions from this type of information, the accounts indicate that many of the black people were not accorded the good care and kind consideration given Groce's and Pattison's negroes.

✓ Near the Hempstead-Bellville highway on the bank of the Brazos River in Waller County lives a negro woman,



Top left: Aunt "Elizabeth Burney," one hundred-five year old ex-slave of Jared E. Kirby.

Top right; Uncle Wharton Collins, eighty-four year old ex-slave of Leonard W. Groce.

Lower left: grave of James T. Pattison. Note thicket in background. There are a large number of slaves buried in this thicket near their master.

probably the oldest person in Waller County. She is known as "Aunt Elizabeth" Burney, one-time slave of Colonel Jack Kirby, who settled about five miles east of the present town of Hempstead where the Prairie View Negro College now stands. Aunt Elizabeth says that she is either a hundred-four or a hundred-five years of age the nearest she can figure it. ¹⁹ She was born in Mississippi and

²⁰ This negro woman took a part in the Waller County Centennial Celebration, and old settlers seem to think that this is her correct age. She can see and hear well and her memory is remarkably clear for one of her age.

brought to Texas when a young child. She remembers that she was a grown woman working in the field when her master read a paper to the slaves, telling them that they were free.

"Aunt Elizabeth said that she had heard that there were some masters who were good to their slaves and the negroes belonging to them were known as "free negroes," because of the freedom that they were allowed, but that "Marster Jack was sho' mean to his slaves." ²⁰ She

²⁰ It might be said that Jack Kirby had a hard reputation and was killed by a man by the name of Steele after

the Civil War. Some ten or fifteen years later his son killed Steele while at church in Hempstead. Interview with Mrs. Arthur Howell and Mrs. Fannie Quinn, June 22, 1936.

states that she had seen negro men beaten until blood ran down their legs. She recounted one instance, when she was about grown, when her master had her stripped naked, laid on the bare ground, her hands and feet staked out, and whipped her until she had to be carried to the cabin because she would not submit to "certain" things. Their food was bad, she said, and sometimes the beef was spoiled and had worms in it; but they were glad to get it and did not complain. Their clothes were very scanty at times. She never knew of her master buying any shoes for the field hands, but sometimes they would take dried cow hides and wrap around their feet. She says that the first pair of shoes she ever owned was after she was freed and that she was so proud of them she hated to put them on but would "just set and look at them."

Their living quarters were small and overcrowded. Most of the negroes never married but just "took up." They arose early, cooked some hoe-cake in the ashes and were usually out in the field by daybreak. In the winter they shelled corn and cleared new ground. There was a

great deal of sickness among the slaves and when they died a hole was dug and they were rolled in it and covered up. After they were freed she and her folks "ran off" and stayed near some other white folks several miles away who treated them more kindly. ²¹

²¹ The writer interviewed "Aunt Elizabeth," June 24, 1936.

The story of "Uncle Wharton Collins," another ex-slave interviewed, was very different from that of "Aunt Elizabeth." He said that he was born in 1853, at Bernardo and belonged to Colonel Leonard Groce. He declared that "Marse Groce" treated all his slaves kindly and seldom whipped one of them. Sometimes his master would bring a shot bag with silver coins in it and throw them in the sand, "just to see the little niggers scratch after them, and sometimes he would put a dollar under our feet and make us dance before giving it to us, and Lawd! Lawd! how we would dance." ²² On Christmas and the fourth of

²² Interview, June 24, 1936.
