

History of James Skinner, Sr., and James Skinner, Jr., in Cass County, Texas

James Skinner, Sr., claimed 640 acres of land in the Red River Co., Texas, area that became Cass Co. on 3 Jul 1841. Witnesses were John Barnes and Calvin Cunningham. He converted the conditional certificate to unconditional on 17 Dec 1845. James Skinner then apparently moved to Bexar Co., TX, because he purchased 200 acres of land there from Enoch Jones, and then he sold 200 acres to Adolphe Schmidt of Comal Co. on 24 Feb 1849. James Skinner, Sr., of Bexar Co., filed on 17 Nov 1848 to appoint James Skinner, Jr., as his attorney to transact his business in Cass Co., so his sojourn in Cass was relatively brief.

Only James Skinner, Jr., was shown in the 1850 Cass Co. census (farmer, age 24, born in Indiana). James Sr. died around 1850, according to letters of administration for his estate filed 9 Jan 1852, which identify James Jr. as his son to whom he owed "a large amount of money." Taking inventory were Joel Hughes, John Land, and John B. Finley. There were ties between the Hughes and Skinner families, but Joel Hughes's relationship to the James Skinners is unknown. There are also Cass Co. land records for Livingston Skinner of Titus Co., TX (who married Jedidiah Ellen Hughes), who is said to be a relative of the James Skinners, but the exact tie is unknown. Some of the Skinner land was sold to William V. Hughes at a public sale, another possible relative.

James Skinner, Jr., married Sarah J. Barnes in Cass Co. on 15 Dec 1852 (John S. Mitchell, Justice of the Peace). James Jr. then sold his father's 640 acres bounded by the land of L. A. Patillo on the West and A. J. Fowler on the north, to John S. Barnes, Sarah's father. John [See separate story about the Barnes family.] sold this land back to James on 5 Mar 1853. Sarah apparently had died by 23 Dec 1854 when her sister Rhoda A. married James Skinner. Rhoda too did not survive long because James Skinner was found in the 1860 Hickory Hill (Avinger), Marion Co., TX, census in the home of Lewis A. and Virginia Hill and their daughter, M. J. E. Hill. James was age 36, an overseer, born in Illinois [sic]. (James Skinner listed his birth place as Indiana when he registered to vote in 1867 – perhaps he was born in either Franklin Co. or Vermillion Co., IN, as James Skinner households with children of James Jr.'s approximate age were in the 1830 census for those counties.) The Hill daughter, Martha Jane Elizabeth Emily, is shown as age 29, born in Tennessee (some descendants say Virginia). Lewis was a shoe and boot maker, and both he and wife Virginia are shown as being born in Virginia. About 1860-1861 M. J. E. E. married a man named Stewart and had a daughter, Ida Emma (also recorded as Martha). She left Mr. Stewart when she found that he did not meet her standard of morality. Around 1860-1861 a son was born to James Skinner and an unknown wife, if it is correct that this son, William H. "Billy," was a half-brother to the children that James Skinner had with M. J. E. E. when they were married about 1862-1863. The number of times James Skinner was married is unclear.

Martha Jane Elizabeth Emily Hill and James Skinner had six known children before James died about 1876 near Avinger: James E. "Jimmie," born about 1863, Henrietta Virginia, born 17 Jan 1865, Thomas Alfred "Tom," born 22 Feb 1868; John Albert, Tom's twin; Charles Jehu, born 24 Oct 1870; and a stillborn twin to Charles. Billy and Jimmie died about a day apart in an epidemic about 1880 and were buried together on the Skinner farm near Avinger. Henrietta also became ill but survived, according to her descendants, because she drank water in disregard to the advice of the attending physician; she did not die until 26 Nov 1922 in Belen,

NM. According to family tradition, Jimmie had a son, George Washington Skinner, although Jimmie would have been only about 17 when he died. Henrietta married Francis Marion Alford in Feb 1883. Tom married Nettie Purcell on 29 Jan 1895 in Houston; he died 26 Mar 1923 in Houston. John Albert married Lucy Grimes; his date of death was 25 Feb 1944 in Hollingsville, TX. Charles Jehu Skinner married Anna Bell Hooten in 1902, and he died 30 Dec 1937 in Mineral Wells, TX.

Martha Jane Elizabeth Emily (Hill) Skinner, James's widow, married Samuel J. Leaveritt on 26 Jan 1882 in Marion Co. He died in 1894 in Lassiter, TX, and she died in Hughes Springs on 8 Aug 1904.