



TARRANT COUNTY TXGENWEB

Barbara Knox and Rob Yoder, County Coordinators

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Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

Joseph N. Willis

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Joseph N. Willis, well-known pioneer in the town of Grapevine, was a Confederate veteran who served in the 34th Georgia Cavalry. He was one of the charter members of the Grapevine Methodist Church. Family genealogists at Ancestry.com say he was born in Georgia in 1839, a son of John E. and Frances Willis. Those sources also say he was living with his parents in Jackson County, Georgia when the 1850 census was taken.

Willis married Mary Elizabeth Willis (as she is named on her death certificate), a daughter of Grapevine pioneer El Nathan Hudgins. Mollie Willis, the widow of Joseph N. Willis, applied for a Confederate pension in 1931. She said she had lived in Texas since January 1, 1856. She was born March 14, 1850, and had been in Texas for seventy-four years. She suggested that he may also have appeared in the official records as Josiah and J. N., and that he was a soldier in the 34th Georgia Cavalry. She said her husband settled in the Grapevine area soon after the Civil War, and that he had relatives in Clark and Banks County, Georgia.

An affidavit by B. R. Wall made in her behalf said that Mr. Willis "usually wore gray clothes and in his residence there is his photo in Confederate uniform and numbers of pictures of



Mr. and Mrs. Joseph N. Willis

Confederate officers adorn the walls of the rooms." The official records show that Willis enlisted March 3, 1862 at Athens, Georgia. The last roll for the regiment on file, dated September and October, 1864, shows him present for duty. He surrendered May 23, 1865 at Augusta, Georgia, and was paroled there two days later on May 23. Mr. Willis did not apply for a Confederate pension.

His death certificate shows that he died at 2 a.m. on March 24, 1914, of nephritis, with an unspecified injury as a secondary cause. An obituary for Mr. Willis appeared in the Grapevine Sun on March 28, 1914: *"DIED. It is our sad duty to chronicle another visitation of the Death angel in our midst; this time it is our highly respected fellow-citizen Joe N. Willis, which occurred at 3:20 a.m. last Tuesday, after a lingering illness of several weeks, caused by a fall. He suffered a great deal during that time, but was patient through it all. "Uncle Joe," as he was familiarly called by his many friends, was born in Georgia; married in 1869 to Miss Mollie Hudgins, daughter of N. Hudgins.... [illegible] joined the Methodist church here in 1871 and has been a consistent member ever since. He was 75 years old at the time of his death. Funeral services were conducted by Rev. Mussett and the remains of Uncle Joe were laid to rest in Grapevine Cemetery late Tuesday evening, followed to the grave by sorrowing relatives and friends. We extend our sincere and heartfelt sympathy to his bereaved wife, who will miss him more than words can tell. May God in His infinite wisdom and love comfort and sustain her in this sad hour of her affliction."*

Mrs. Willis's obituary appeared in the Grapevine Sun on May 30, 1940: *"MRS. M. E. WILLIS DIES. Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Willis, age 90, died at her home in Grapevine at 6:15 Saturday afternoon. Mrs. Willis was born in Belfant, Alabama, March 14, 1850, and moved to Texas at the age of four with her parents, Rev. and Mrs. E. N. Hudgins. They traveled in covered wagons, with a caravan of other relatives and friends. They first stopped at Birdville and stayed there several months, this being the County Seat of Tarrant County at that time. They then moved to Grapevine and settled here, where she spent the rest of her life with the exception of time spent in McKinzie College at Clarksville, where she was educated. She was married to J. N. Willis, April 8, 1869. He passed away, March 21, 1914. Mrs. Willis was a charter member and active worker in the Grapevine Methodist Church for which her father had donated land for the building. For a number of years she was a Sunday School teacher and was also president of the Womans Missionary Society. She and three sisters were honored in 1928 when the Womans Missionary Society observed its 50th Golden Jubilee. They were awarded Golden Jubilee pins for being pioneer members of that organization. She was known throughout the community as 'Aunt Mollie.' Funeral services were held at 4:30 p.m. Sunday at the Grapevine Methodist Church, Rev. A. W. Franklin officiating. Burial was in the Grapevine Cemetery, and six of her nephews were pallbearers. She is survived by six sisters: Mrs. C. W. Bowlin, Mrs. Mattie Tinsley, Mrs. A. M. Dye, Mrs. Minnie Watson, and Mrs. Lena Chenault, all of Fort Worth and Mrs. Fannie Wheeler of Clarendon."*



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