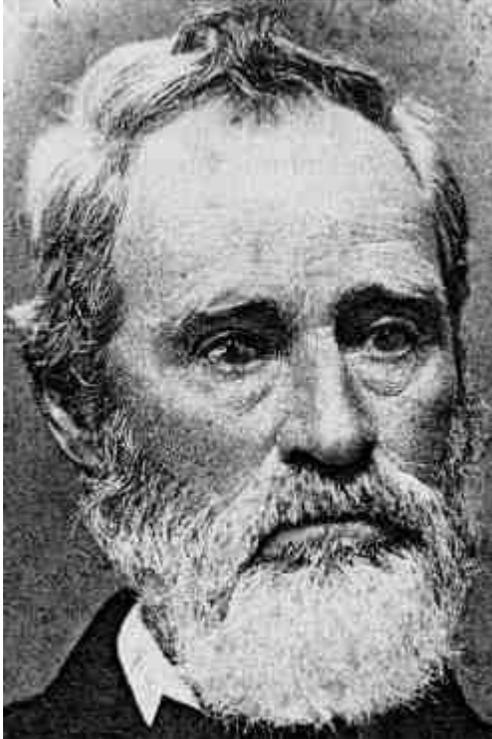


Gilbert Dunlap Greer

By William N. Greer



Gilbert Dunlap Greer, the eldest child of Nathaniel Hunt Greer and Nancy Ann Terry Roberts, was born October 11, 1822, in Bedford County, Tennessee. Little is known of his youth save that of where his family lived as he was growing up. The Georgia period of his young life was spent first in DeKalb County, then in Troup County. About 1831 the family crossed the Chattahoochee River to live on the Cherokee land that would soon become Chambers County, Alabama. After farm chores were done, the young Gilbert would have helped with his father's prosperous trading post where both whites and Indians bartered for goods.

Gilbert was 14 when the family sailed to Texas and only 17 when the new republic granted him a headright of 320 acres, on December 5, 1839. As a young man, Gilbert would fish along Buffalo Bayou, sometimes supplementing the family table, sometimes selling his catch in the nearby city of Houston. He never converted his headright into actual land; instead, he sold his headright on October 5, 1846. However, Gilbert did

acquire property and in 1850 sold 110 acres in Washington County to his future father-in-law, James Addison Lane, a long-time friend of the Greers who had brought his family to Texas around 1846.

Although the Greer clan had moved to Texas after its independence was won in 1836, conflict with Mexico continued frequently for several years.

On June 18, 1843, Gilbert married Susan G. Corathers (no photo exists) in Austin County, Texas. She was born in 1824, the daughter of George Corathers and Susanah Durham who hailed from Jones County, Georgia. Gilbert and Susan continued to live in Austin County for a few years and their first child, Cassandra (Cassie), was born there on March 19, 1846. Gilbert and Susan had at least 2 other children, a son Henry (birth date and site unknown), and a daughter Susanna (aka Susan or Susie) born February 1, 1849, in Washington County. Some claim that Gilbert and Susan had another daughter named Elizabeth, but on this the historical record is silent.

By 1850 settlements had pushed much further up the Brazos River. Gilbert, Susan and their children accompanied this advancing frontier and in about 1851 set up residence in lower Milam County at "Sullivan's Bluffs" near where the Little River joined the Brazos. Just below the falls of the Brazos, the site was at the limit of river boat travel along the greatest river in Texas. In short order, the community created by Augustus Sillaven became the boomtown of Port Sullivan

("Sullivan" being a corruption of the founder's name) with a population of nearly 200 in the year 1852. Before long, Gilbert's parents and siblings had relocated near him.



On October 13, 1853, Gilbert married Marion Bonita Lane, the eldest daughter of James Addison Lane. The little evidence we have suggests that Marion was a what Mormons called a "plural wife," but we cannot be sure. On the ill-fated journey to Utah, many died of cholera. Nearly 70 years later, Gilbert's sister-in-law Catherine Ellen Camp Greer recalled that "Gilbert's first wife, Sue, and most of his children died" of cholera. The toll apparently included daughter Susanna, whose name appears on the migrating company roster, and son Henry, although his name is missing. Daughter Cassie remained in Texas and was reared by her grandmother. The roster lists Susan Greer as dying on June 20, 1855, placing the wagon train in what would later become Brown County, Kansas. But it is uncertain whether the Susan in the record is the mother or the daughter. A record of the ordeal includes the death on June 22 of Elizabeth Greer, which may well have been Gilbert's youngest child.

On August 10 the wagons stopped while Gilbert's second wife Marion delivered their first-born whom they named Margaret. Although little Margaret lived long enough to reach Salt Lake City, she died there a few weeks later on October 28. The following winter was a terrible one and the Greers lost most of their herd. Next spring, over Brigham Young's objections, Gilbert and most of his kin returned to the milder climate of Texas with what remained of their livestock.

On the return trip, the Greers met a Utah-bound wagon train which included the Lanes (Marion's family) and the Phelps (another allied family) whom the Greers persuaded to turn back for Texas. They reached Texas in October and settled in Hill County on what they thought was vacant land. A cabin was hastily erected for Marion who gave birth on December 10, 1856, to Willmirth (Willie) S. Greer. Learning that the land was *not* vacant, Gilbert found (and on January 16, 1857, purchased) 320 acres of Bosque County land where Plowman's Creek flowed into the Brazos River. Here he built perhaps the first stone house in Bosque County, a warm and inviting structure in which Marion would give birth to 8 more children.

During the Civil War, Gilbert had three stints of military duty. First, with several kin, he served at home in Capt. Samuel Fossett's company of "Minute Men" formed as part of the Texas State Troops. During the next several months, Gilbert was called up for a total of ten days service to protect the county from Indian depredations.

But before his militia duty was over, he enlisted on January 16, 1862, in the *regular* army at Camp Hebert as a 2nd lieutenant under Capt. Terry Caruthers in Company H, Colonel O. Young's Rgmt. (aka the 12th Regiment — and sometimes *incorrectly* listed as the 8th Regiment), Texas Infantry, Confederate States Army. The next day, January 17, Gil was dispatched back to Bosque County on a recruiting assignment which apparently lasted throughout February. On

March 1, 1862, while in Bosque, he was officially discharged from the militia. Soon, near Hempstead in Waller County, he reported for duty on March 9 at Camp Young — apparently an *ad hoc* name in honor of the company commander. Two weeks later, on March 26, Gil assumed command of Company H with a pay grade of \$80 per month. On July 21, 1862, he was elevated to the rank of Captain and his pay was raised to \$130 per month.

Gil's unit was dispatched to Louisiana where about the first of October he contracted dysentery. By year's end the Company Muster Roll of December 31, 1862, showed that he was absented to the Command Convalescent Camp near Little Rock, Arkansas. On January 22, 1863, he tendered his resignation due to chronic dysentery, affirming his inability to perform the duties of his office for the previous 4 months. His petition was initially approved on this date by Surgeons E. L. Massie and J. C. Welch of the Medical Examining Board then forwarded to higher authority. On January 24 it was approved by the Convalescent Camp Commander, Colonel O. W. Roberts and Gilbert was soon on his way home.

Within a few months after Gil's return to Bosque County and his subsequent recuperation, he was once again serving in the military. This time he found himself a lieutenant in Capt. H. Fossett's Company (known as Company "A") of the Battalion attached to the Texas Frontier Regiment, C.S.A. at Camp Colorado, headquarters of said Regiment. On April 1st, 1864 (by Special Order No. 6 of Col. J. E. McCord, Admst Sec Adjt) he was appointed "A.A.Q.M. & A.A.C.S. of said Company" and asked to give "the requisite bond and enter immediately on the duties of that office." Gil's duty in the last stage of the war was one of protecting the Texas frontier against Indian depredations. A few months later the war was over.

After the war, his nickname "Gil" was often replaced with "Captain" by those who held his military service in high esteem. For many years thereafter, his estate on the



Brazos, known as "Greer Park," was host to hundreds of veterans from all over the state who gathered each summer to reminisce of gallant deeds and fallen friends.

Gilbert and Marion built one the earliest stone houses in Bosque County on a pleasant rise a few hundred feet southwest of where Plowman Creek emptied into the Brazos. They lived there from the 1860s until the early 1900s when they moved to the nearby town of Morgan to live with their son Thomas. The decaying structure became delapidated with disuse, eventually serving as a storage barn until being demolished when Lake Whitney came into being around 1950. Now all that remains is the rubble that marks the foundation of the memorable building.

Gilbert and Marion's daughter Willie was unsuccessfully courted by Robert J. Sims, one of many cowboys who drove the great herds along the nearby Chisholm Trail. On October 23, 1875, Willie was at home preparing for her next day's wedding to another man when she was tragically shot and killed by the rejected suitor who thereupon took his own life.

In 1881 the town of Kopperl began on land which Gilbert and his brothers sold to the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad Company. Along tracks just a few hundred feet away from their house, Gilbert and Marion soon heard the frequent thundering of steam locomotives as their frontier was transformed into an modern society. Later, Gilbert donated a part of his farm for the Kopperl Cemetery where he, Marion, and many of his family would be laid to rest.

By the turn of the century, Gilbert and Marion's rock home had fallen into disrepair and had become less comfortable for the aging couple. They sold the farm and moved into their son Tom's comfortable frame house in the railroad town of Morgan which had sprung up along Steele's Creek a few miles southwest of Kopperl. It was here that Gilbert died on March 12, 1910 and Marion on April 15, 1916. Her Kopperl Cemetery headstone bears the inscription: "The Gift of God is perpetual life Through Jesus Christ our Lord" and his reads "There is a balm for every flower. Farewell we shall meet again."