

IN HONOR OF "JOSIE" - by Will Corbett...

Some 110 years ago (give or take a little), a recently widowed 44 year old woman arrived by train in Modesto, CA with her 4 sons, aged 5 to 16 years, in tow.

She'd been born just 2 years after the Civil War ended, in the reconstruction South, to a family that just a few years before had been somewhat affluent and important; but by the time of her birth, were on the losing side of that destructive war in the "split" town of Maryville, in East Tennessee.

She'd married her husband, a son of the victors of the above mentioned war in 1893, and almost exactly one year later, they found themselves chasing the cotton boom in Waxahachie, Texas. There, she had a daughter born & die in a matter of just a couple of weeks; then two sons born and survived, then another daughter born only to have her also die about 10 months later; and finally, two more sons born.



Sometime prior to 1910, the family moved to Garland, TX, joining her husband's brothers in partnership in some cotton farming prospects. And then, in the early winter of 1911 (February), her husband "caught a chill" (as reported in her own letters) and died just a few days later.

Her move to Modesto was driven by her sister, who was living there at the time, and by the lack of family "back home", except for one of her brothers, who she didn't see again for another 45 years.

Upon their arrival in Modesto, the family leased some farm land on Blue Gum Avenue, and about 5 to 6 years later, she was able to purchase some property on Pauline Avenue, west of the city center of Modesto. On that land, they built a Sears & Roebuck pre-fab home, and

over time a very successful dairy farm.

That widowed woman was my great-Grandmother, Martha Josephine Wilkinson Kidd, but she was always just known as "Josie". And the more I learn and consider about her, the more I am in awe of her. She raised those boys on her own, and built that farm into one of the premier dairies of its time.

She lived to the age of 84, having seen the many amazing changes in the world during that time period.

On Sunday, October 23, 2022, all but one of her grandchildren (aged 80 to 88), who all knew her, and most of her great-grandchildren, some of her great-great grandchildren, and even both of her great-great-great grandchildren (my own grandkids), all got together (as we have off & on for the last 20 years or so) in her chosen town, where many of those folks still live, to celebrate being a family, and being her family, and marveling at the wonder of her life, and all that she built.

As I age, my appreciation for all that came before me grows exponentially, and I'm so thankful that the family ties still bind.