

# Remembering a dedicated genealogist

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Contributing writer

One of the leading genealogists in South Georgia and North Florida, Edwin L. "Boe" Williams Jr., passed away the last week of August in Valdosta, Ga., after a long fight with leukemia.

The Valdosta Daily Times stated that "Boe has been the heart and soul of the Huxford Genealogical Society and South Georgia and North Florida genealogy for many years. He gave tremendous amounts of time and made sure that Judge Folks Huxford's series, 'Pioneers of Wiregrass Georgia,' continue. Boe, known far and wide for his vast family knowledge of genealogy, loved stories of the pioneers, and knew of them as did Judge Huxford, that in building their lives, they built a nation."

Williams was historian of the Huxford Genealogical Society and Library in Homerville, Ga., which recently merged with Elmer's Genealogical Library in Madison. This is one of the largest private genealogical libraries in the Southeastern U.S.

His interest in family history might have stemmed from his own roots. Williams described himself as being part of a large multigenerational family. He frequently stayed with his

great-grandmother who lived with his parents. She was one of 27 children. Family patriarch and Boe Williams' great-great-grandfather, Andrew Elton Williams, lived from 1800-73 and had 22 children resulting in 160 grandchildren with his two wives; first wife, Martha "Patsy" Brent (1803-45) and second wife, Melissa Cerena Underwood (1829 to 1908). Boe Williams' genealogical curiosity and research resulted in the publication of a prodigious volume about his great-great-grandfather in 2003. It was titled "Andrew Elton Williams: Ancestors, Contemporaries, Descendants, and Allied Families."

Andrew Elton Williams was the great-great grandson of Ezekial Mathis (1680 to 1740) known as the "Abraham of the Coastal Plains." Boe Williams explains that "without exaggeration, Ezekial is the forefather of over a million people scattered all over the nation, but centered in North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas."

Andrew Elton Williams' father, John S. Williams, settled with his family in 1820 along the Spring Creek area of the Chipola River in what is now Jackson County near present Marianna. There were no real roads, just trails and Indian paths. They had large herds of cattle, sheep and other livestock and traveled by foot, horse

back and ox cart from Bullock County, Ga. In 1821, Spain ceded Florida to the United States and those that had entered this territory were entitled to 640 acres for \$1.25 an acre. Thus began the life of the "Williams Clan of Galilee." Their first reunion was held in 1903 in Graceville. Each year on, the first Saturday in October, an immense gathering is held at Galilee Methodist Church near Graceville. A large cemetery beside the church is filled with Williams' descendants. Many descendants now live in or near Bay County and surrounding counties. We owe our gratitude and appreciation to Boe Williams for preserving the history of this prominent Northwest Florida family.

If you are interested in more detailed information for genealogical research, you may search the following websites: [www.huxford.com](http://www.huxford.com), [www.rootsweb.com/flbcgs](http://www.rootsweb.com/flbcgs) or [www.williamsclanofgalilee.org](http://www.williamsclanofgalilee.org).

## BCGS meeting

The Bay County Genealogical Society meeting will be at 1 p.m. Nov. 20 in the Bay County Public Library.

The presentation will be on "William Cawthon and His Descendants" and the speakers are Sarah McSwain and Linda Clark.