

# *Across the Jordans*

**An imagined Hollywood film proposal based on my paternal grandmother, Naomi Gilcrease Jordan Campbell.**

## **SYNOPSIS**



My grandmother Ella Naomi Jordan Campbell is born in 1873 in Gilmer, Upshur County, Texas. She inherits a kind and gentle personality from her Jordan ancestral lines of dutiful, pious English Methodist settlers in America. Three generations produce a total of 33 children. My grandmother's youngest child, with her pompous, quarrelsome husband John Paul Campbell Sr., is my father John Paul Campbell Jr.—their 13th child.

## **CHARACTERS**

**Wiley Henry Jordan**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Great-Grandfather**  
**(1818-1856)**

Wiley Henry Jordan is born in 1818 in Campbell County (now Cobb County), Georgia, to plantation-owner parents Absalom Jordan and Julia Roberts Jordan. In 1840 he marries Lucinda Mayfield Bonds, born 1819 in Franklin, Georgia. They have seven children.

**James Richard Jordan**  
**Great-Grandfather**  
**(1844-1929)**

James Richard Jordan is born 1844 in Campbell County, Georgia, to parents Wiley James Jordan and Lucinda Bonds Jordan. Following his father's death and mother's remarriage in 1856, he joins his new "blended" family as a young teenage pioneer relocating by wagon-train to Jackson Parish, Louisiana.

**Ella Naomi Jordan**  
**Grandmother**  
**(1873-1956)**

Ella Naomi Jordan is born in 1873 to parents Rev. James Richard Jordan and Rebecca Wiley Covington Jordan in Gilmer, Upshur County, Texas, during her father's five-year ministerial appointment there. In 1891 she marries John Paul Campbell Sr., born 1870 in Jackson Parish, Louisiana, of parents Dr. Albert Russell Campbell and Matilda Jane Gilcrease Campbell. John Paul and Naomi establish a cotton farm in southern Ouachita Parish, Louisiana

# **STORYLINE**

## **ACT I**

### **ACT I: MY GREAT-GREAT-GRANDPARENTS**

**Scene 1:** Wiley Henry Jordan is born in 1818 in Campbell County (now Cobb County), Georgia, to plantation-owner parents Absalom Jordan and Julia Roberts Jordan. In 1840 he marries Lucinda Mayfield Bonds, born 1819 in Franklin, Georgia. They have seven children. He dies of appendicitis in 1856, leaving his 12-year-old son James Richard, my great-grandfather.

**Scene 2:** In 1856, the widowed Lucinda Jordan marries a widowed childhood friend, John Wesley Carroll. In 1857, they, along with her seven children and his son John Franklin Carroll, join a wagon-train (crossing the Mississippi River on a ferry at Vicksburg), ending in Jackson Parish, Louisiana, where they establish a plantation. Lucinda and John Wesley Carroll have two daughters there.

### **ACT II: MY GREAT-GRANDPARENTS**

**Scene 1:** James Richard Jordan is born 1844 in Campbell County, Georgia, to parents Wiley James Jordan and Lucinda Bonds Jordan. Following his father's death and mother's remarriage in 1856, he joins his new "blended" family as a young teenage pioneer relocating by wagon-train to Jackson Parish, Louisiana. Others in the wagon-train continue on to settle in Upshur County, Texas.

**Scene 2: The 45-day wagon-train journey is heavy work for 13-year-old James Richard Jordan. He duties would include driving livestock, driving the wagon, getting the wagons across fords, out of mud holes and up hills, setting up camp, preparing meals and tending to children. They follow trails through dense forest, untamed rivers, and streams. After heavy rains, the rivers are not fordable. There are swamps to cross and hills to climb. Illness, injury, snake bite, and death are around every bend in the trail. He arrives with his family to Jackson Parish, Louisiana, in 1857, where they clear their land, till the soil, and plant crops.**

**Scene 3: At age 18, in September 1862 joins Gray's 28th Louisiana Infantry, organized by northeast Louisiana merchants to defend their homes and businesses from Union Armies. This unit is composed of 95% farmers with no military experience. Two-thirds of the unit suffer from measles, yellow fever, malaria, and cholera. Their ill-equipped training facilities in Monroe, Louisiana, use wooden sticks instead of rifles. Lacking current weaponry, they fight fiercely with some successful engagements; but they are no match against invading Union troops with the latest war materiel. Reduced to hand-to-hand combat, Gray's Infantry lose nearly half of its members through death, dismemberment, and desertion. James Richard Jordan is discharged, unharmed, from Gray's Infantry in January 1863.**

**Scene 4: James Richard Jordan becomes a farmer and Methodist minister in Jackson Parish, Louisiana. He marries Rebecca Wiley Covington, born in 1846 in Richmond, North Carolina, but raised in Upshur County, Texas. He establishes a**

church in Jackson Parish, Louisiana. He and Rebecca have eleven children, including my grandmother.

### ACT III: MY GRANDMOTHER

Scene 1: Ella Naomi Jordan is born in 1873 to parents Rev. James Richard Jordan and Rebecca Wiley Covington Jordan in Gilmer, Upshur County, Texas, during her father's five-year ministerial appointment there. In 1891 she marries John Paul Campbell Sr., born 1870 in Jackson Parish, Louisiana, of parents Dr. Albert Russell Campbell and Matilda Jane Gilcrease Campbell. John Paul and Naomi establish a cotton farm in southern Ouachita Parish, Louisiana, and he is appointed a Justice of the Peace there.

Scene 2: In 1895, Naomi Campbell writes to the U.S. Postal Service in Washington DC to complain about the slow mail in her region. The USPS replies to her that it is willing to establish an office there. She agrees and submits names as requested. The two names she submits are rejected because Louisiana already had offices with those names. Finally she submits "Luna," the name on the oven door of her wood-burning stove. The name is accepted, and Naomi Jordan Campbell is officially appointed Postmaster of Luna, Louisiana, on February 6, 1896. She keeps the post office in her home.

Scene 3: In 1913, as a Justice of the Peace in Ouachita Parish, John Paul Campbell Sr. becomes engaged in a feud with nearby neighbors over an arrest of their family member. While John

Paul is out riding a horse, a teenage son of the neighbor family rides up behind him and slits John Paul's throat with a knife, nearly killing him. In revenge, John Paul orders his eldest son, Sam Houston (age 21), to kill the neighbor's son. Sam Houston rides out to the neighbor's farm and shoots and kills the teenager. In response, the neighbors vow to kill John Paul and his entire family.

In the dead of night, the Campbell family (now including 12 children) pack up what belongings they could and, abandoning their homestead, all leave by wagons for West Carroll Parish, in northeast Louisiana, where a brother of John Paul has a farm. Naomi Campbell is pregnant with my father during the trip. They live for a time in an abandoned train car, where my father—John Paul Campbell, Jr.—is born, their 13th child. In 1914, John Paul Campbell Sr. purchases land east of Oak Grove, Louisiana, and establishes a successful cotton farm.

Scene 4: John Paul Campbell Sr. has a storm shelter dug behind their house to ease his mortal fear of tornadoes. When dark clouds appear from the west, he would descend into the shelter with all his children. But he would insist that his wife Naomi remain in their house to pray. He would tell his children: “Your mother is such a good Christian woman that God would never harm her; but He would surely try to kill me!”

Scene 5: In 1928, Naomi announces to her family that God wants her to see the Pacific Ocean. So she and four of her children, including my 15-year-old father, set out to California in a Ford Model-A sedan. On the way, they travel through treacherous Colorado mountain roads to experience the views

from famed Pike's Peak. When passing along precipitous roadsides, Naomi in the backseat reads out loud from the Bible to ensure their safe passage.

Scene 6: Naomi and John Paul Sr. raise their children to adulthood in the fast-paced 20th century. They celebrate their 50th anniversary in 1941.

Scene 7: On September 28, 1956, John Paul Campbell Sr. dies at age 86. When informed of her husband's death, Naomi decides to will her own end. She requests that a consoling quote by Jesus—said to his disciples on the night before he was to die—be engraved on her tombstone: "Let not your heart be troubled." She dies three weeks later.