

## George Rolando Baird

(28 November 1849 - 25 January 1895)

"Rowe" was probably one of the first persons born in Dallas, evidently born there within a month or so of his parents' arrival. He seems to have been named for his father, but the source of his middle name is a mystery. It doesn't seem likely that he was named for a family friend or even for a famous person. There were fewer than two dozen men in the whole country in 1850 sporting "Rolando" as either a first or last name, most of them children. None of them lived anywhere near Tennessee or Texas.

He is listed in the 1850 through 1880 censuses as "George R." and signed his name that way to at least two letters. His name is recorded as "George Rolando" in the family Bible and "Rolando" in the newspaper article announcing his father's death.<sup>1</sup> We also have a school receipt dated in 1864 for "tuition of Rolando" made out to his father George W. Baird.<sup>2</sup>

He was not only the eldest child in the family, but also evidently the most enterprising of the sons, at least as a youth. He bought his first piece of property, a two-acre lot on Elm Street, on 14 February 1868 at the age of 18. The 1870 census shows him as a 20-year old still living in his parent's house, but with real estate valued at \$1,000 and personal property valued at \$2,000.<sup>3</sup> His occupation was "clerk in store", apparently referring to his father's grocery business. On 1 September 1870, his father sold all the stock of his grocery store just off the public square on Jefferson Street to Rolando for \$500 in gold.<sup>4</sup>

George was also active in the community as a youth. His name appears as one of eight members of the first Dallas Brass Band in 1870 and as a member of the Young Men's Democratic Club in 1871.<sup>5</sup>

Judging from advertisements in the *Dallas Weekly Herald*, Rowe was the proprietor of his father's store after 1870. He advertised regularly in the newspaper, touting his stock of everything from chow-chow to wheat flour to "pure Irish whiskey". For example, the 21 December 1872 issue of the *Dallas Weekly Herald* carried the following advertisement:

*Geo. R. Baird of the Friendly Groceries on Jefferson has just received a large shipment of smoking and chewing tobacco direct from Richmond, Virginia, among which are the celebrated brands of "Hog's-Eye", "Temptation", and "Virginia Belle". If you use the weed, give them a call.*

This was one of his last advertisements, however. The area around the public square was by then a thriving commercial district with several large grocery and general stores that may have put George out of business. His foray into the grocery business lasted just a few years, for he had apparently abandoned the business well before his father died in 1875. By 1878, while Rolando

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<sup>1</sup> See paper on George Washington Baird for both references.

<sup>2</sup> Yet another of the family records in the possession of Georgia Brown Fowler, provided by Robert E. Fowler.

<sup>3</sup> Dallas County 1870 census, Precinct 1, p199.

<sup>4</sup> Dallas County Deed Book N, p102.

<sup>5</sup> *Dallas Weekly Herald* issues of 28 May 1870 and 27 May 1871, respectively.

was still in his twenties, the newspaper was reporting that all his property had been sold for non-payment of taxes.<sup>6</sup>

Rolando married Emma Stewart on 23 February 1874 in Corsicana, which is in Navarro County about 60 miles south of Dallas. I have their original marriage certificate, which shows that a JP named W. R. Bright married them but which mentions no witnesses.<sup>7</sup> Why they married so far from Dallas is a mystery. One possibility is that her father Moses Stewart, who was thought to be associated with railroads, may have been in Dallas in 1872 or 1873 when the first two railroads arrived there, and by 1874 may have moved south following the railroad construction. It is also possible that George had gone to Corsicana to pursue some new business.

The court records of the 1878 suit by Alzeda Persise against Rolando's mother Mary Baird (see George W. Baird page) contain two letters by George R. Baird to an attorney in Robertson County, Tennessee. Both were signed "Geo. R. Baird".

George and Emma are not listed in the 1875 Dallas city directory, perhaps still living in Corsicana. But the 1878 city directory shows them living with his mother on Houston Street in Dallas, with no employment noted for George. In the 1880 census he was living at 1110 Elm St. not far from his mother and gave his occupation as "farmer".<sup>8</sup> The first three children shown below were in the household. In the 1881 city directory he was listed as a "barkeeper" and in 1883 he was a bartender for Gluckman & Co. In 1884 no occupation was listed and in 1886 he was missing altogether from the city directory. He was back in Dallas in 1888 when the city directory listed him as a teamster residing on Main Street.

In June 1890 Rolando and Emma bought a home in the Highland Addition of Oak Cliff, across the Trinity River from Dallas. The Dallas city directory for 1891 lists him as a printer for Ford Brothers, and gives his residence as Polk Street in Oak Cliff. The land was evidently involved in a lawsuit indirectly mentioned in the *Dallas Times Herald*.<sup>9</sup> They sold the Oak Cliff place on 14 December 1891 and disappeared from Dallas records for a few years. He did not appear in the city directories for 1892 or later.

My grandfather Harry L. Baird wrote on his World War I draft registration card that he was born in Temple, Bell County, Texas on 18 February 1892. (My father independently obtained the same information.) Temple is roughly 130 miles southwest of Dallas. There are no deed entries in Bell County for the Bairds. If they left Dallas temporarily after selling the Oak Cliff property, Emma would have been seven months pregnant and it's possible Harry was born en route to someplace else. Whatever the circumstances, by early 1895 they were back in the Dallas area apparently living in or near Lisbon.

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<sup>6</sup> *Dallas Daily Herald* issue of 6 April 1878.

<sup>7</sup> The Navarro County clerk parted with the original marriage certificate in 1971, now in my possession.

<sup>8</sup> Dallas County 1880 census, District 3, City of Dallas, 1 June 1880, p2. Geo. R. Baird 30 TX TN KY farmer, Emma (wife) 25 OH OH OH housekeeper, Effa (daughter) 4 RX TX TX, G. W. Jr. (son) 2 TX TX TX, D (daughter) 4/12 TX TX TX.

<sup>9</sup> February 25, 1891, *Dallas Daily Times Herald*, p. 1, col. 5.

## Rowe "Beard" dies of Gangrene

The *Dallas Daily Times Herald* issue of 25 January 1895 reported, under the headline "Rowe Beard loses an Arm":

*Taken off at the shoulder. His gun, which he believed to be unloaded, had been charged by his son, and it went off while being handled*

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*Dr. Williams this morning went out to Mr. Rowe Beard's home, three miles west of the river, to amputate his right arm at the shoulder. As stated in the Times Herald yesterday Mr. Beard was shot in the biceps muscle by the accidental discharge of a shotgun two days ago. Mr. Beard took the gun to the field with him. It was unloaded when he last handled it, but his son loaded it when his father was not observing, and when Mr. Beard took hold of it by the muzzle to handle it as he would an unloaded gun it went off, the charge of the shot tearing away almost the entire muscle of the right arm. The attending surgeon at first wished to amputate the arm, but Mr. Beard would not consent to the operation. Yesterday mortification set in. Mr. Beard is 45 years old, and has been a resident of Dallas for twenty or more years.*

The previous day's issue is no longer available, but the issue of 30 January 1895 carried this follow-up story under the headline "Lost His Arm And His Life":

*Rowe Beard dies from the effect of his accidental wound*

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*Rowe Beard, the farmer living west of the river who accidentally shot himself in the biceps muscle of the right arm, in pulling his shotgun out of his wagon by the muzzle last week, died yesterday. The arm was amputated at the shoulder, but the operation was delayed too long, as mortification had already set in above that point. Mr. Beard believed that he would die under the operation, and had it postponed until some of his relatives whom he wished to tell good-bye could reach him, and the delay was fatal. Mr. Beard was 46 years old and had lived in Dallas County for upwards of twenty years.*

The *Dallas News* issue of the same date adds that he "was accidentally shot while pulling his shotgun out of a wagon at Pemberton's place two miles south of here... (he) leaves a family in destitute circumstances." Pemberton's place apparently refers to the Lisbon farm of Alfred Pemberton (1839 – 1887), whose son William Pemberton had recently married George Rolando Baird's eldest daughter.

I can't explain the "Beard" spelling in these articles, as his name was "Baird" in every other record found other than the 1880 census. There is no doubt, though, that this is George Rolando Baird. The circumstances of his death match the story told by my father's relatives, and the date of his death is within four days of the date recorded in the family Bible. These same relatives thought he was buried in the Lisbon cemetery. If so, he is apparently in one of the unidentified graves.

At her husband's death, Emma Stewart Baird was nearly 40 years old with several young children and was pregnant with her last child. There is, unfortunately, no clear record of what happened to her. Her husband's six brothers and sisters died long ago, and collectively they produced only one child, who was herself dead by 1951. Emma Baird's own children were all dead by 1966.

We are forced to rely on the recollections of two of her grandchildren who were born after these events but who were still alive in the 1970s when my father interviewed them.

### **Ramona Bevills Molen's Story**

One of those grandchildren was Ramona Bevills Molen, born about 1906 to Emma's daughter Elizabeth Baird. Ramona's mother died sometime before 1910, and she was taken in by her aunt Daisy Baird. Ramona obviously had no first-hand knowledge of events, and could only repeat what she recalled being told as a child by her aunt Daisy -- who was about 15 when her father died. Daisy told her (she said) that Emma Baird first remarried to a farmer who himself died not long thereafter. Emma then married again to a miner named Williams and moved to New Mexico with her youngest children. Her daughter Annette (or "Nettie") died about that time, and Emma, Elizabeth, and Dolly all died within a few years in New Mexico or California.

The only marriage record for an Emma Baird in the area is the Dallas marriage of a "Miss" Emma Baird and T. E. Crow on 14 April 1896. A Thomas E. Crow, born about 1843, was listed in the Dallas City directories from 1894 through 1900 as a real estate agent. However, he was apparently the same man who was in the 1880 census of Webster Parish, Louisiana with a wife named Mary and the 1910 census of El Paso, Texas with a wife named Mollie -- the 1910 census states that they had been married for 37 years. He died in San Angelo, Tom Green County in 1914. I could not find another T. E. Crow anywhere.

There was also a record for the marriage of an Emma Beard and W. W. Howard on 30 March 1898.<sup>10</sup> I could not find any trace of either Emma Crow or Emma Williams in any state in the 1900 census. The 1896 Dallas County tax list has been published, and there are no persons at all named Crow, nor any Bairds or Beards who might have been Emma. Ramona further thought that Annette, or "Nettie", died young, perhaps prior to 1900, and that Emma, Elizabeth and Dolly lived in New Mexico.

### **Ruth Pemberton Alexander's Story**

Another grandchild was Ruth Pemberton Alexander, who was born in 1897 to George and Emma's oldest child Effie Baird Pemberton. Effie was already married when her father died. Ruth related that her mother Effie separated from her husband about 1903 and took 6-year old Ruth with her to live with Emma Baird and her husband Williams in New Mexico. Ruth thought that her grandmother Emma predeceased her mother Effie Pemberton who died, she said, in April or May of 1904 near Santa Fe. That would seem to place Emma's death about 1903. Ruth also said that Annette was already deceased when Effie arrived in New Mexico, and that Elizabeth and Dolly were living in New Mexico with their mother. After her mother's death, Ruth was returned to Texas to live with her father. Her impression was that Elizabeth and Dolly may have gone to California after 1904 and died there within a year or two.

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<sup>10</sup> Dallas County Marriage Book Q, p248

## A Family Mystery

I could not find any record of any of the family in either New Mexico or California. What we know for certain is that Daisy and Harry Baird were living with their sister Effie Pemberton by 1900. The 1900 Dallas census shows Daisy, age 19, and Harry, age 13, living with their sister Effie Pemberton and her husband. George Washington Baird, the eldest son, was not found in 1900 but was later living in Pittsburg, Texas. If the stories of Ruth and Ramona are accurate, only the three younger girls continued to live with their mother, and there is no sign of any of them in the 1900 census.

I have photographs of George Rolando Baird and his wife Emma Stewart Baird taken in the 1880s. I also have a scrapbook dated 1890 done by Mary Jane Stewart, Rolando's mother-in-law, for her grandson George Washington Baird. It has no entries of genealogical interest but is otherwise quite interesting. (See also the Moses Stewart family page.)

George Rolando Baird and Emma Stewart had two sons and five daughters:

1. **Effie M. Baird** (April 1876 - c1904) She is shown in the 1880 census as age 4, her birth date in the 1900 census given as April 1876. She married William Meredith Pemberton in Dallas on 28 August 1892.<sup>11</sup> They moved briefly to Jackson County, buying land there in 1897 but selling it two years later. This matches Ruth Pemberton's recollection that her parents lived briefly in Edna, Jackson County, Texas until 1899, when they moved back to Dallas. They appear in the 1900 census of Eagle Fort, Dallas County, with sons **Alfred Monroe Pemberton** (1893-1949) and **Raymond Meredith Pemberton** (1894-1955), and a daughter **Ruth Pemberton** (1897-1991). Both Harry Baird and Daisy Baird are also in the 1900 household, identified as her brother and sister.

Effie's husband petitioned for divorce in 1902.<sup>12</sup> According to a brief account of the matter, he was awarded a divorce on the grounds of her "adultery & prostitution" on 17 October 1902.<sup>13</sup> Effie was listed in the 1902 Dallas city directory as a dressmaker living at 727 Elm. In the 1903 Dallas directory she was listed as a janitress boarding at 122 McKinney. In an interview nearly seventy years later her daughter Ruth Pemberton Alexander, born in 1897, claimed that Effie joined her mother in New Mexico and died there in the spring of 1904. Ruth, who was then barely seven years old, apparently returned to Texas to live with her father, as the 1910 Tarrant County, Texas census shows the widower William Pemberton with daughter Ruth and sons Alfred and Raymond in his household.

2. **George Washington Baird** (16 November 1877 - 27 April 1955) He was evidently the son who loaded his father's shotgun, not yet 18 when his father died. Whether he went with his mother to New Mexico is unknown. He was not found in the 1900 census, so he may have been in transit and not counted. At some point he moved to Pittsburg in Camp County, Texas where he married Sarah Virginia Hensley (1881-1974) on 5 August 1906. (Coincidentally, a

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<sup>11</sup> Dallas County Marriage Book L, p585

<sup>12</sup> Index to divorce cases, Dallas County, Texas. The filing of the case was reported in the 14 August 1902 issue of the *Dallas Daily Times Herald*, p. 7, col. 4.

<sup>13</sup> *The Dallas Journal*, Volume 47 (Dallas Genealogical Society, 2001), p63, listing divorces granted in Dallas County.

much older and apparently unrelated George W. Baird was enumerated in the 1900 census in Pittsburg.) Although his gravestone and death certificate both give his year of birth as 1878 that appears to be incorrect. G. W. Baird wrote it as 1877 when he filled out his World War I draft registration card. A birth year of 1877 is also consistent with his age in the 1880 census.<sup>14</sup>

He and Sarah Hensley had at two children, both known to my father: **Don Virgil Baird** (18 March 1909 – 18 March 1991) and **Helen Baird Berry** (1920- ). A third child, Royal Boyd Baird (1911-1912) died at the age of 15 months and is buried near his parents.<sup>15</sup> George is in the 1910 census of Camp County, Texas (shown as age 30) with his wife Sally (age 26) and son Don (age 1). In 1920, he is in the Camp County census (age 42) with Sallie (38), Don (10) and Helen (6/12). In 1930 he was still in Camp County, with Sally, Don (21) and Helen (10).

His death certificate gives the cause of death as “acute coronary occlusion” subsequent to angina pectoris of six days duration. Oddly, the informant (his son Don’s wife) gave his parents’ names as “Robert Baird” and Emma Stewart. George and his wife are both buried in the Rose Hill Cemetery in Pittsburg, Texas. His son Don V. Baird and his first wife Hazel Livingston Baird are buried in the same cemetery.

3. **Daisy Baird** (16 May 1880 - 30 August 1966) Ramona Bevills Molen told my father that Daisy’s birthday was 16 May, which matches the date on her death certificate although the year of birth on the death certificate is clearly incorrect. Her death certificate (she died in Houston) shows her father's name as "Roe Baird" and her birth date as 16 May 1889, which understates her age by nine years. (The informant was John Molen, her son-in-law.) Ramona said that Daisy had polio and was taken in by her Stewart grandparents after her father's death. Ramona was either misinformed or misunderstood, for Daisy is in the 1900 Dallas County household of her older sister Effie Pemberton, her age given as 20 and her birth date as May 1880.

According to Ramona, Daisy married Louis A. Bradley, and then William David Vick. She had no children herself, but did rear her niece Ramona Bevills. All this appears to match what records are available. Louis A. Bradley is listed in Houston city directories as early as 1903, his occupation listed as a painter. How Daisy ended up in Houston is not clear but she apparently married Bradley about 1909. The 1910 Houston census showed that Daisy, age 26, and Lewis A. Bradley, age 35, had been married about one year. Her niece Ramona Baird (sic), age 4, was the only other member of the household. Louis and Daisy are listed in city directories as late as 1918 living at the same address, but by the 1920 census they had divorced and Louis A. Bradley had remarried to a woman named Addie. Subsequent city directories list Louis Bradley and Addie, but not Daisy. Daisy was not located in the 1920 census, but her ward “Miss Ramona Bevell” was listed in the 1920 city directory as a clerk. Neither of them were located in the 1930 census, but the 1940 census shows Daisy living in the household of her husband William D. Vick, age 40, an oil ship crew member, in Houston. Her age was listed as a very generous 47, thirteen years younger than her actual age.

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<sup>14</sup> He is listed as age 2 in 1880. The “as of” date for that census was June 1, so a person born in November 1878 should have been listed as age 1.

<sup>15</sup> There are no dates on his gravestone, but the Texas Birth Index notes the birth of a child, gender not noted, on 22 August 1911 who must have been this son.

Daisy's death certificate indicates that she had been confined to bed for the twenty years prior to her death. She was buried in the Abbey Mausoleum at Forest Park Lawndale Cemetery. Her second husband William D. Vick died in Houston on 27 May 1974 and is also buried at Forest Park Lawndale. Mrs. Nona Molen, "daughter" (sic) was the informant.

4. **Harry Leon Baird** (18 February 1887 – 24 December 1945) His father died when he was eight, and he must have been left behind by his mother when she remarried and left the Dallas area. He and his older sister Daisy were both enumerated in the 1900 Dallas County household of their eldest sister Effie Pemberton. According to censuses, he did not attend school past the eighth grade. My grandfather, he married Allie Anthony on 21 February 1915 in Omaha, Morris County, Texas. They had one child, my father.
5. **Elizabeth Baird** (c1885 – c1909) According to her daughter Ramona, she married George Bevills (or Bevels) sometime after 1904 and moved with him from New Mexico to California after her mother's death. She had one daughter, **Ramona Bevills** Molen, born about 1906, who died in Houston, Harris County, Texas on 20 February 1985. "Bess" must have died sometime before 1910, when 4-year old Ramona was living in the Houston household of her aunt Daisy Baird Bradley.<sup>16</sup> (Note that her surname in this record was "Baird". Whether that suggests her mother was unmarried or that Daisy did not know her last name is unclear.) Ramona's birthplace was listed as California.<sup>17</sup> Daisy, who raised Ramona from infancy, was the source of Ramona's knowledge of her family, and one cannot help but wonder how much of Daisy's stories were actually true.

Ramona had a photograph of her father George Bevills and her mother Bess, with his father William Bevills, but she did not know when or where the photo was taken. We can find no record at all of these Bevills in either New Mexico or California. One candidate to be that person is a man named George Sidney Bevel who was born in Rogers, Arkansas on 7 August 1877 to William Bevel and his wife Martha.<sup>18</sup> He was enumerated in the 1900 census of the Oklahoma Indian Territory (the Chickasaw Nation) in the household of his father William Bevels and mother Martha A. Bevels.<sup>19</sup> In 1910 and 1920 he was enumerated in Pontotoc County, Oklahoma (formed from the Nation in 1907) with a wife named Mary Emma Coley whom he had married on 22 December 1901 and several children born 1903 and later.<sup>20</sup> He moved to California and was enumerated in San Diego, California in 1930 and 1940. He died there on 26 April 1957. If he was Ramona's father, we can't explain how or where he knew Elizabeth Baird or how he came to father a child with her at a time when he was married to another woman. (I'd note that it might explain why Ramona was listed as "Baird" in the 1900 census, since illegitimate children take the surname of the mother. Could Daisy have manufactured a background for the child to legitimize her?)

Ramona also had a photograph obtained from Daisy Baird that showed Emma, Elizabeth, and

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<sup>16</sup> Harris County, Texas 1910 census, SD 8 , ED 44, page 19A.

<sup>17</sup> The census lists both parents as born in Texas. One wonders if Daisy actually knew where Ramona's father was born.

<sup>18</sup> World War I Draft Registration card. He wrote his name as "Bevel" without the "s". Although he gave the year as 1877 in this document, the 1900 census gives his age as 23 and birth as August 1876.

<sup>19</sup> 1900 census for Township 4, Chickasaw Nation, Indian Territory, page 45B. The family appears as "Bevels".

<sup>20</sup> Marriage Registers of Chickasaw Nation, 1910 and 1920 censuses of Pontotoc County, Oklahoma.

either Annette or Dolly on a porch – but again the time and place were unknown.

6. **Annette Baird** (??? – by1910) Annette and Dolly are supposed to have died young, but after Emma, in an accident of some sort, according to Ramona Bevills Molen. This must have been prior to 1910, for neither Annette nor Dolly seem to appear in the 1910 census. Daisy Baird called her “Nettie”.
7. **Dolly Baird** (ca1895 – by1910) According to Elizabeth Baird’s daughter Ramona, Emma Baird was pregnant with Dolly when Rolando Baird died. She also thought that Dolly died after 1904 but before 1910, perhaps in California.