



William Brockman Bankhead

Paul F. Goodridge

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The Bankhead family is one of the most interesting and influential families in American history. William Brockman Bankhead's heritage was traced to sixteen family branches established by each of his individual great great-grandparents. Family connections to numerous events in American history and relationship to prominent individuals challenge the imagination. Family branches first had close connections to monarchs of England and Scotland. Here families lost sizeable estates during England's Civil Wars and forced from their homes by Oliver Cromwell. Prominent colonial connections include marriages to relatives of Presidents Madison and Jefferson.

Throughout American history this family demonstrated valiant patriotism and military service. In South Carolina they were members of local militia units that achieved many Patriot victories culminating in British surrender at Yorktown. In Tennessee they joined militia units supporting Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812. William's father was wounded while serving in the Civil War from 1861 through 1864. Another family branch serving in the South Carolina legislature opposed succession, even to the point of killing another man in a duel. This family would lose two sons to the war. William's brother Henry served in the Spanish American War.

The Bankhead family settled in Northwest Alabama in the early 1830's. They were major plantation owners and became Alabama's most prominent political family. For fifty-nine consecutive years there was at least one Bankhead serving in the United States Congress. They were responsible for legislation that benefited the average American and left a lasting legacy on American history that we still enjoy.

The family established the first Department of History and Archives in this country. William played for the first Alabama football team and was the first team captain. William's first marriage ended in tragedy with the death of his beautiful wife following childbirth. William had two daughters; Tallulah a famous actress and Eugenia a socialite. These girls led life styles outside the expected norm of their day.

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