

Read [Robert M. Williamson's entry](#) in the [Biographical Encyclopedia of Texas](#) hosted by the [Portal to Texas History](#) , [Williamson County](#) from the [Handbook of Texas Online](#)

WILLIAMSON, ROBERT M. (Three-legged Willie). A native of Georgia; in early life afflicted with a white swelling, which stiffened one of his knee; came to Texas in 1827, and located at San Felipe, in the practice of law; was Arcade in 1834; in 1835 commanded a company in a campaign against the Indians, and was one of the Committee of Safety at Bastrop, where he then lived; was in the General Consultation the same year. In 1836, he was District Judge; in 1840, entered the Texas Congress and was re-elected represent Washington County until annexation; and for several years represented the same county in the State Senate after annexation.

Of all the popular leaders during the period of the Texas Revolution, none wielded a more potential influence than R. M. Williamson. He deserves a more extended notice; and we copy some of the closing paragraphs of a sketch of his life which appeared in the Texas Almanac for 1861.

Although his opportunities for acquiring wealth and independence were unequaled by those of any other man, yet was he of such generous and improvident nature, that he was often embarrassed in his pecuniary (money) affairs. Like Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Monroe, and many other greater men, he not infrequently felt the iron pressure of 'Res angusta domi.'

It may be stated as creditable to his integrity, that in the midst of corruption and speculation he lived and died in poverty.

In 1857, he had a severe attack of sickness, which seriously affected his intellect. The death of his wife, a daughter of Colonel Edwards, of Wharton county, occurred shortly afterwards. From these combined shocks, his mind never entirely recovered until the time of his death, which transpired peacefully and calmly on the 32nd December, 1859, in Wharton County.

We have thus traced rapidly and imperfectly a few of the leading events in the life of this distinguished patriot. It has been done under unfavorable circumstances and without pretense to absolute certainty as to dates, etc. Yet in no instance have the value of his services been magnified knowingly. His character deserves a higher and more extended notice.

He was in many respects a remarkable man. He possessed a wonderful hold upon the reflections of the masses, over whose passions and sympathies his control was unbounded. The reckless daring of his own character contributed largely to this influence. This, aided by a generous, unselfish spirit, and captivating manners, made him, wherever known, the idol of the people.

Inaccessible to threats or bribes, he was an upright and honest judge, who unflinchingly administered the law. In Congress and the Legislature he had no selfish purpose to subserve: he was therefore the able and watchful guardian of the people's rights.

His intercourse with his brethren of the bar was marked with great courtesy. Toward the younger members, he ever extended a helping hand, and breathed a kind word of encouragement. The writer is but one of hundreds who remember gratefully the kindness extended to them in days long past, by Judge Williamson.

The eloquence of Judge Williamson more nearly resembled that of John Randolph than of any other historical character.

When fully aroused, there was a fire and vigor in his speech that surpass all description. True, there was a quaintness and eccentricity, but it was all stamped with the originality and power of genius.

He was not only a wit of the first class, but a humorist also; and like all great humorists, he bore a burden of melancholy which was only brightened by these sudden sallies, as the storm clouds are illumined by the sheet lightning. In an appeal to the people, and as an advocate before a jury, he was unsurpassed.

We are of those who believe that 'life is not without its purposes.' For example, admonition, encouragement, or reproof, the lives of our predecessors are most eloquent. We do not present the subject of this sketch as free from blemish. Far from it - he was mortal and therefore fallible. He had one fault, and a most grievous one it was. One of 'the tears of the brave and follies of the wise.' This might well and properly be ascribed to the 'temper of the times' which a large portion of his life was spent — the wild and disorderly state of society then existing.

The fate of our distinguished men has been most deplorable - Collingsworth, Grayson, Rusk and Jones died by their own hands. May I supplicate for Robert M. Williamson (who, if he was a great sinner, was also a great sufferer) the kind charity of all Christians, and close this article by the following lines from the Light-House, which no voice sang so sweetly as his own:

" 'In life's closing hour when the trembling soul flies,
And death stills the heart's emotion,
Oh! then may the seraph of mercy arise,
Like a star on eternity's ocean.