

# Ancestors in Dixie



**The Hudgins-Burton side of my family or as we say in the South, "my father's people "**



**The Burton Homestead on Chandler Mtn., Saint Clair County, AL**

My Grandfather, Jack Hudgins and his family were from Low Gap, in Saint Clair county and my Grandmother Lila Burton's family moved to Chandler Mountain (aka the Steele, AL area) around 1910. Unfortunately, I have no pictures of the Hudgins' of Low Gap at this time.

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Jim, Jessie Lee, Lila, Willena, Clariece

The Burton Girls and Brother at the family homestead.



The inscription on the back of the picture in Lila's handwriting reads as follows:

Mamma Burton

Poppa Burton

Esther

Naomi

Jim (a Mr. Miller)

Jessie

Lila (the baby)



Left: This is the same family as above with a few more faces many years later (1959).

Featured prominently in the center of the picture is Stella Redden Burton. She was my fathers grandmother and I only remember seeing her once or twice when I was a child. I believe the reason for the gathering is the funeral of her husband, Box Burton. All those people gathered around her are her sons and daughters and their kids.

Left: Jessie Lee and Lila (1959)

In the deep south we call it *Decoration Day*. Other areas call it memorial day but what it is, is a time of remembrance of those who have died. Tombstones are cleaned and polished and a picnic dinner is cooked. This is a picture of my Grandmother Lila and her sister sitting in the cemetary in all their finery, notice the hats and gloves. It is a



homecoming of the "Upper Church" and anyone that has ever been a member or any of their families are invited to have dinner (on-the-ground) outside, to come for the gospel singing and to see all those people that they remember from their childhood. The Upper Church as it is called is a Congregational Methodist Church at the top of Chandler Mountain. Both sides of my family attended there at one time or another in the past 100 years.





**Above: Dyanne (my mom), Lila and me**

**Left: Jack Hudgins, Danny Hudgins (his son) and me (the daughter, Jacqueline is missing and there are no pictures available at this time)**

My grandfather is remembered by everyone as a good man. He was always known as a hard worker and at times worked out of town only coming home on the weekends. I believe that was when he was working for NASA in Huntsville (Redstone Arsenal). What most people forget to mention is just how smart he was. He could build a house or re-build a car's engine. He liked his coffee strong and black, and would tell people that made weak coffee that "it doesn't take entirely that much water to make coffee."



He died when I was only 7 or 8. He went to the doctor the day before he died of congestive heart failure. The doctor pronounced him healthy and sent him home.

**Left: Larry Hudgins (my dad) and me (1965)**

To the left is a picture of me and my dad, unfortunately, he moved away to Wisconsin when I was only a little older than this pic. He divorced my mom and in actuality I never saw him very much after that. He died when I was only 17.



**Left: Madolynn Burttram and Lila Hudgins**

Grandmother would have never admitted that any of her kids did anything wrong, there was a strong streak of pride in her. I don't think I really understood her until after she died. She taught me so much. It is hard to say just how much because I was fortunate enough to have her in my life for 28 years.

We really had some great times, I would go to her house and spend the entire weekend. We would talk about politics.....she was a yellow dog democrat, which means she would vote Democrat even if they were to put a yellow dog (yes, a canine) on the ballot. She was a very committed person. One of the strangest things I remember seeing was her go to the local general store where the old men sit around the cast iron heater, chew tobacco and talk politics. I saw her sit with these men and talk politics for over an hour once. She could hold her own. I think she must have seen alot of herself in me because I was the absolute political opposite and she seemed to love it....it gave her a sparring partner.



**Left: Lila in the daylily patch**

We also both loved family events. All those things that most young people hate, I loved. We would go to family reunions and the such and she would get to show me off and the like. I was the [Birmingham-Southern](#) grad in the family. Grandmother was as interested in politics as she was in her church. She was a United Methodist and a strong believer in [Steele United Methodist Church](#). I also loved church and my college was a United Methodist college so I guess I was hitting all the right buttons with her.

I really think that a great movie could be made with Lila as a central character. Proud and determined. A leader in the community and utterly devoted to her family. The strange thing is that I never heard from her that she loved me until she was on her deathbed. When she died, I told one of her neighbors that I would probably not even go to the funeral. The neighbor, a cousin, gasped and said, "you can't be serious, she absolutely worshipped you and talked about you all the time." I said, "she did?" Always hard for me to believe but I heard the same story again and again at her memorial service. People that I did not know would come-up to me and say identically the same thing. I am just sorry that 8-months before she died we had an argument and I refused to visit her.

**Left: Lila in Founder's Day clothing celebrating the creation of the City of Steele, AL 100 years earlier.**



[\*Want to see More Ancient Pictures from the Photo Albums?\*](#)

We never know when life will end. I have learned from this to always stay close with family, especially the elderly members. Believe it or not, and I know at times it is impossible to believe, but they are truly treasures and if they say something hurtful maybe they are just upset that you did not visit them. Always love them and be certain to tell them that you do. Leave no account unsettled with people because you never know if it will be the last time you might see them.

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Photos

Four-Generations of Family

Stella Burton, Lila Burton  
Hudgins, Larry Burton  
Hudgins, and Me

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**Left: These are the parents  
of Stella Burton. That is a  
total of five-generations  
pictured on this page.**

I hope you have enjoyed the trip down  
memory lane. It is too bad that my  
memories are not that complete, but the  
recollections that I do have are very  
grand, and I think most of the pictures  
restored beautifully.

Maybe historians and genealogists will  
find this information useful in linking all  
of us together.

Peace,

J. Wade Hudgins