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Will Sanders was the oldest of twelve children of Hampton Sanders and Lizzie Mixon. It was recorded in the Sanders Family Bible that W. E. Sanders was born Dec. 2, 1868. All of the entries on the page for births in the Sanders Bible show "borned" as the past tense of born. This Old English usage is still not uncommon in the South.

Will grew up in Glenville, Arkansas. The 1880 Census recorded that he was 11 and home with the family, that he worked on the farm and was in school. The family moved to a farm north of Magnolia about 1887, when Will was 18. At some time between the 1880 Census and his 1894 marriage in Sherman, Grayson County, Texas, he left home. His younger brother Jewell went to Grayson County in 1892, when Jewell was 21, and Will was 24. It is possible that the brothers left home together. Their father's first cousin Ed Sanders had gone to Ethel, in Grayson County, from Louisiana about 1871.

Will's father Hampton S. Sanders died at Will's home in Tioga, Grayson County, Texas, in July 1896. Will was living there with his first wife Minnie and their daughter Hazel, born the year before in Sadler, Grayson County. Hampton had come to the mineral wells in Tioga for his health. Will arranged for burial in Ethel; the Magnolia newspaper stated that the hot summer weather was the reason the body was not brought back to Magnolia. The 1900 Census of Grayson County listed Will's family as wife Minnie, daughter Hazel and Minnie's widowed father William Moore (a daughter, Annie, had been born in 1897 and had died in 1898). Will's occupation was given as commercial traveler. Apparently the work he did as a boy working on the home farm had been enough farming for him.

Will's wife Minnie died in 1901, two months after the birth of a baby boy. Will's sister, Lula Sanders, took six-year old Hazel and the baby home to Magnolia for care. The baby died soon afterwards, and the body was sent to Texas for burial. In 1902, when Will married Lizzie Hatcher, Hazel moved back to Texas to live with her father and his new wife and stayed until 1910. Then Hazel, 14, returned to the Sanders farm in Magnolia.

Will's and Lizzie's daughter Marion was born in 1904 in Denison, Grayson County, Texas. Sometime before the 1910 Census, the family moved to Chillicothe, Hardeman County, Texas. Marion said that her father was mayor of Chillicothe, but Marion's daughter Rosalie suspects some exaggeration. The Census stated that Will was a real estate agent. Probably he also continued to be a traveling liquor salesman.

In 1912 the family left Chillicothe and moved to Wichita Falls, where Lizzie's parents lived. In 1916 they moved to Shamrock, Wheeler County, Texas. Marion

later told the story to her daughter Rosalie: "While in Wichita Falls, my grandfather (Ballard Preston Hatcher) made a deal with a man to swap property owned by this man located in Shamrock, Texas, for my grandfather's property in Wichita Falls. In the property trade, Daddy Jim [Ballard Preston Hatcher] got a mill and elevator in Shamrock. Daddy Jim didn't like the idea of my mother and me being alone so much while my father [William Elihu Sanders] was on the road selling liquor. Daddy Jim wanted my father to be bookkeeper. My father wanted to get off of the road anyway, so my father did go to work for Daddy Jim through some persuasion, so we all moved to Shamrock. My father was also an overseer of the negro men, supposedly a bad lot, that he had on his payroll working at the mill."

Rosalie related four different stories that her mother Marion told her regarding Will's death in 1917.

Story No. 1. He died while on a business trip to Little Rock, Arkansas.

Story No. 2. Between two or three weeks prior to his death, trouble started, and Will tried to calm the negroes, and at that time one negro hit him in the stomach with a brick. He was bruised pretty badly, so about two weeks later he became concerned, as his stomach was swelling and he was in considerable pain. He contacted his brother, Dr. Percy Sanders, and they met in Little Rock at the hospital. Dr. Percy performed the surgery and found that his spleen had been injured, that it had burst, and the removed spleen weighed eleven pounds. He died a day or so after surgery in the hospital in Little Rock, on March 3, 1917.

Story No. 3. Shamrock was a small town, and there were no men in Shamrock to do improvements, so my grandfather went to Amarillo for a crew of men to come and add on to the mill and elevator. He let the crew sleep in the mill at night and they ate downtown. In the process of building, there was some brick work done. A couple of negroes got in a fight, and my father went out to bust up the fight, and in the process, he got hit in the belly with a brick, and that night he sent the negroes back to Amarillo. But the damage to my father had been done and we didn't know anything about it for some weeks. When his stomach began to enlarge, we found out it was a ruptured spleen. He contacted his brother, Dr. Percy Sanders, at Stamps [but G. P. Sanders lived in Stephens], Arkansas, and my mother and father went to Little Rock, and surgery was done.

Story No. 4. He finally rode the train all by himself to Little Rock, and his brother, Dr. Percy Sanders, performed the exploratory operation and found that his spleen had burst, and he had already bled internally too long to save him.

Will's death certificate states that he died of myelogenous leukemia in Texarkana, where he had been in a sanitarium (hospital) three weeks. Enlarged spleen is a

symptom of leukemia, and some parts of Marion's stories are probably right. Helon Sanders Yates, daughter of Dr. G. P. Sanders, said in 2001 that her father often sent patients to the hospital in Texarkana. The family custom was to call Dr. Percy whenever there was a medical problem. Dr. Sanders usually did not do surgery of this type; if surgery was done, it probably was by another physician.

Death Notice, "Arkansas Gazette," March 6, 1917:

Texarkana, March 5 - W. E. Sanders, aged 51 [he was 47] of Shamrock Tex., died Saturday night in a local sanitarium. He was a traveling salesman. He was a brother of Dr. G. P. Sanders of Magnolia [in fact Stephens]. The body was sent to Stephens [in fact Magnolia] for burial.

Obituary, "The Columbia Banner," Magnolia, Arkansas, Wednesday March 7, 1917:

DEATH OF W. E. SANDERS

W. E. Sanders of Shamrock Texas, died in a Sanitarium at Texarkana last Saturday and his remains were brought to Magnolia for burial. Mr. Sanders was a brother of Miss Daisy Sanders and Mrs. John [Lula Sanders] Walker who live here.