

The activities of Samuel Le Mare (1839-1925) and his family

by
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In 2013 I began to investigate the circumstances of the murders of my first cousins, once removed, in Mexico in 1918. They were Lucy and Caroline Le Mare, daughters of my great-uncle Samuel. I found that a book, *The Hillcoat Murders: Legend and Fact*, had already been written by Solveig A. Turpin¹. This covered more than I had hoped to record but some family details were, not surprisingly, excluded. This note is an attempt to provide some of them.

Samuel was the first son and second of eleven children born to Richard and Sarah (née Burden) Le Mare in the sixth generation of Huguenot silk manufacturers who originally settled in Spitalfields about the time of the Revocation of the edict of Nantes. Samuel was born on 6th January 1839 at 27 Spital Square, London, the home of his parents where Richard practised silk weaving.² We have no record of Samuel's life in Spitalfields but presumably from an early age he worked with his father.

The history³ written by Richard, Samuel's father, records that his brother, Ebenezer Robert, left London for Manchester in 1829 when he left the partnership⁴ of his father, Joshua, and his brother Joshua Richard. However, Joshua Richard visited Ebenezer Robert in 1840 and was so impressed that he advised that he and Richard should open a warehouse in Manchester. In November of that year Richard travelled there with his wife and three children, of whom Samuel was one. We have no detail of Samuel's activities there until 1862 when on 8th May he married Euphemia Robertson⁵, a daughter of a Manchester surgeon, in the Congregational Cavendish Chapel, Chorlton-upon-Medlock. The 1881 census, taken on 3rd April, tells us that Samuel was then a felt manufacturer employing 400 hands and living at Windlehurst House, Marple. They had nine children but the ninth, Elizabeth, died in infancy in 1876. All the others were scholars in 1881. Samuel's brother Alfred was married to Mary Levett Jackson and his sister, Agnes, to Herbert Somerville Jackson whose father and uncle were in the hat business in the first half of the 19th century. In 1887 Kelly's Directory for Manchester recorded Samuel as a silk manufacturer in the firm of Le Mare and Griffin, silk and mixed goods manufacturers, at 7 Portland Street.

In 1885 the long established silk mill of the Willmott family in Sherborne closed but within a few months it was re-opened by the Rev. Joseph Ogle⁶. Ogle was a Congregational minister and in 1871 married Jessie Robertson, a sister of Euphemia, at Hayfield, Derbyshire. Thus Samuel and Joseph were brothers-in-law. Jessie and Joseph had a daughter, Hannah, in 1873. In 1877 Jessie died and in 1880 Joseph married Mary Ann Lee Lancaster. Joseph invited Samuel to manage the Sherborne mill so he and his family moved there and lived in Westbury House, Sherborne. Joseph wrote in a letter to Hannah on 22nd September 1887: "Yesterday the new foreman and I went north to engage commenced work and on Monday we sent away the first bale of finished silk". Presumably the new foreman was Samuel. Sherborne silk became renowned worldwide so that thanks to Samuel's skill an order was received for flowered silk dress-lengths for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee⁷. By 1907 the mill was thriving and profitable and was sold to A.R. Wright & Co. of Bingley. We do not know how long Samuel remained in Sherborne but the 1911 census shows he was then retired and

1 Solveig A. Turpin: *The Hillcoat Murders: Legend and Fact – A Tale of Banditry, Kidnapping, Viloence, Obsession and the Lost Treasure of the Encantada*. 2009: Cedar Mountain NC, RTS Press. ISBN 0-9678043-2-9.

2 Le Mare, P. H. *A note on the Le Mare family in the English silk industry*. Huguenot Families No 5, Sep. 2001.

3 Le Mare, Richard. *A short sketch of early family History*.

4 London Gazette 1 Sept 1829 Issue 18607 p.1632.

5 J.P. Consterdine.

6 Sherborne's silk industry, www.sherbornemuseum.co.uk/silk.htm.

7 'Sherborne Silk Mills and Marglass' by Elizabeth Cockburn.

living at Windlehurst, Hemyock, Cullompton, Devon. Euphemia died there on 9th March 1912 in Wellington, Somerset⁸

Samuel became active in other respects in Sherborne. He was a governor of Foster's School from 1898 to 1905 and was also connected with Sherborne School and Lord Digby's school for Girls. He was a founder member with Joseph Ogle of the Sherborne Cottage Building Company.

The family.

Samuel and Euphemia had nine children of whom only one, Helen, married in England and remained in the country. The ninth, Elizabeth, died in infancy in 1876. Helen's husband, Charles Robinson, was a chemist who had a tar distillery in West Bromwich. They had a son, Richard, who wrote in his memoirs of his grandfather as follows⁹:

- It was towards the end of the eighties that Sam and his wife, Euphemia, with their family, moved from Marple to Sherborne in Dorset. The silk mill there had been in financial straits and since it involved a sizeable labour force a local consortium headed by the Rev. Joseph Ogle, a Congregational minister who had married Jessie Robertson, a sister of Euphemia, had been formed to put it back on a firm basis. The rescue made it necessary to recruit a new manager and Sam appears to have been the man. I had always understood he had been in the silk industry hereto and no doubt this, plus nepotism, explained his move. When the move took place three daughters were living at home and it was while living there that (my) mother [Helen] became engaged and that Sam, with a dash of Wimpole Street, used to pre-empt her letters when the post arrived and keep them for a while to torment her. Sam represented a restrictive presence to all of us. What he did all day I have no idea – he had a tiny study at the back and I think he must have complained to my aunts about my indifference to him, because I was told I ought to make a habit of greeting him and kissing him at breakfast, beard and all. Sam would occasionally go and spend a night with W.G. Ibison after my grandmother had died. I can vividly remember my aunts dancing a sort of cachucha on the terrace as they watched the pony and trap disappear down the lane outside.

Thus, Samuel seems to have been a difficult man which may explain why all except Helen left to live abroad. Solveig A. Turpin, in her book *The Hillcoat Murders: Legend and Fact*, discusses this possibility. I was told by my cousin, (Hilda) Margaret Le Mare, that our aunt May (Mary Shelly Le Mare) said that uncle Samuel sold the Le Mare share in the silk business when he moved to Willmott's mill in Sherborne, thereby depriving her father, Alfred, the second son of Richard and Sarah, of taking over the business. Alfred worked in the business for about twenty years but left it at about the time that Samuel left; he then became cashier and later company secretary with William O'Hanlon & Co. Ltd., upholsterers and warehousemen. My father and uncles rarely spoke of Samuel. He seems to have been an autocratic and perhaps selfish senior sibling.

William, the eldest son of Samuel and Euphemia, went to sea and became a commander of P&O liners, and of a hospital ship during the 1914-18 war. He married Mildred Southwell in 1902 but the marriage broke up in 1918. Their son, Malcolm, joined the Royal Navy.

The youngest son, Samuel Bellhouse Le Mare was born about 1873. In 1891¹⁰ he was a bank clerk

⁸ Ancestry.co.uk and J.P. Consterdine.

⁹ Email 30 Jul 2013 from Janet Harris (née Robinson), great grand-daughter of Samuel.

¹⁰ Census.

in Axbridge, Somerset. He emigrated to South Africa where he married but in 1901¹¹ he was described as a boarder with Emily Elizabeth Britton (née Broadbent) and her six children in Lewisham; his occupation was recorded as “Transvaal Refugee School Tutor”. They married on 20th November 1901 and the family emigrated to South Africa where they lived in Johannesburg. After Euphemia's death, Samuel visited Bellhouse and family in 1912, leaving Liverpool for Natal on 20th October on the ss Inanda bound for Beira; he stayed until 1915¹² when he arrived in Liverpool on 24th May on the ss Nestor. He then went to the home of his sister, Mary, in Macclesfield.

The other five members of Samuel's family went to Texas and Mexico. Much of their activities has been investigated and reported by Solveig A. Turpin, of the Teresa Long Institute of Latin American Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 78712, in her book *The Hillcoat Murders: Legend and Fact*. Two brothers, Richard and George, left England in 1885¹³. In 1890 Richard was a livestock breeder and the Texas State Gazetteer for 1892 shows Richard was then in Brackett or possibly Hillcoat, a small settlement nearby where the post office was opened in 1890 and Frederick Hillcoat was postmaster; the post office was closed in 1894 and the settlement deserted¹⁴. The town seems to have been named for him. Details of the activities of the brothers are largely unknown but they seem to have been ranchers, perhaps in association with Freddie. In July 1899 George visited England; he is entered as a rancher in the passenger list of the s.s. Californian departing from Montreal and arriving in Liverpool¹⁵. One report comments: “According to the family, he [Dick] was somewhat of a scamp – his brother-in-law in England in his will asked his sons to keep on sending Richard an allowance if they could.” The same report states that Dick signed a release on five lots. Later, in 1929, Richard was paid \$100 following Hillcoat's death for his interest in the Brackett lots. The association with Hillcoat had other important consequences when Freddie, his stepson, wife and sister-in-law were murdered at La Mariposa, Mexico.

Janet Harris has commented¹⁶ “Richard (Dick), the second son was much loved by his sisters, as is clear from their letters. He seems to have had a drink problem and was also much given to arthritis, which caused him pain and misery. He took, think, whatever work he could and certainly at one time had a flock of sheep and later of Angora goats to look after, and was cited at another time as a member of Hillcoat's business. He was a kind and affectionate man who probably missed his family very much, as he was only 18 when he went out there, but failure dogged him and he obviously struggled. He was, I think, the last to die”.

In the 1901 census Lucy, Samuel's eldest daughter, is recorded as single and a sick nurse, at the time visiting her married sister, Helen, in Leamington Spa; she may have become a hospital matron¹⁷. Presumably she continued nursing but on 17th December 1906, aged 43, she left Southampton¹⁸ for Tampico, Mexico, on the ss *Fürst Bismarck* under Captain Lotze. She arrived on 9th January and the following day married Frederick Hillcoat, then aged 54. I am not aware of any details of their courtship but Solveig Turpin suggests that Lucy may have first met Freddie when he travelled to England in 1901 on the death of his older brother, Charles. This implies a long courtship by

11 1901 census.

12 Passenger list published by www.ancestry.co.uk.

13 Hillcoat files.

14 Texas State Historical Association; <http://www.tshaonline.org>

15 Passenger list www.ancestry.co.uk.

16 Email 28 Feb 2015.

17 Turpin, *op.cit.*, p53.

18 Passenger list www.ancestry.co.uk.

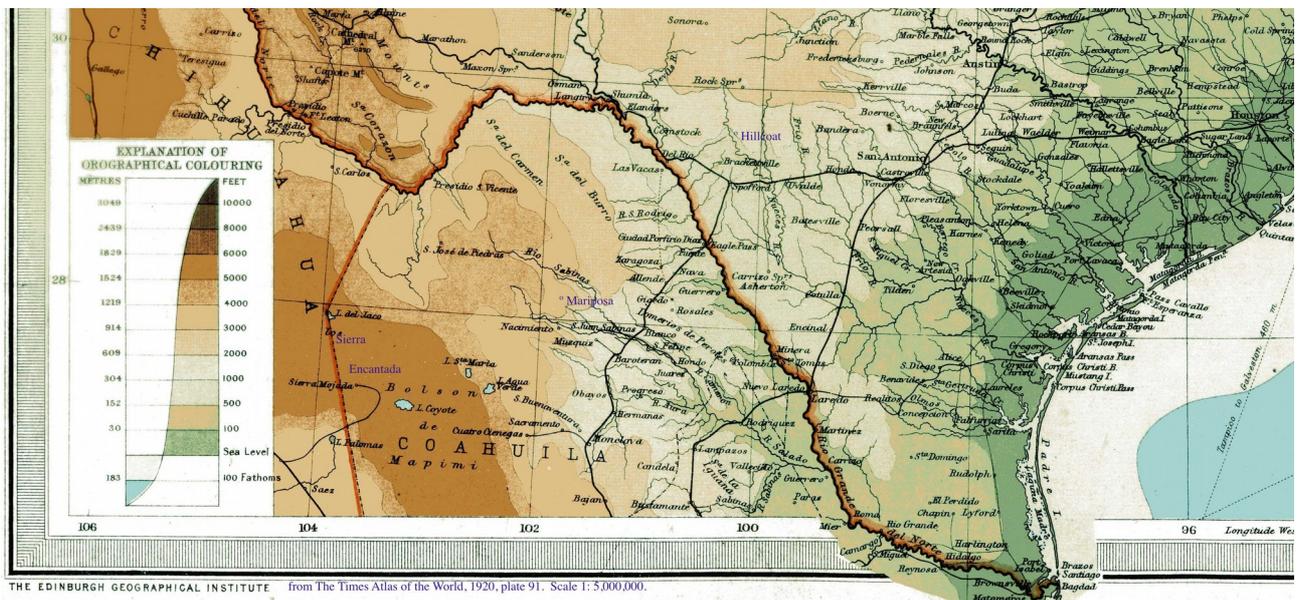
correspondence but a Frederick Hillcoat travelled from New York to Glasgow in August 1904¹⁹ which may indicate the couple met again before marriage.

Frederick's first wife, Mary Mercer Ord, had died in March 1899. Mary was also known as Molly Virginia Ord. She was born in 1865, a daughter of US Major General Edward Otho Cresap Ord and his wife Mary Mercer Thompson (b. Culpeper VA 1831, d. San Antonio TX 1894). Edward was born in 1818 and died in 1883 of yellow fever in Cuba. Frederick and Molly had a son, Garesché, known as Garry, born in 1896.

On 25th October 1912, five days after their father left for South Africa, Lucy's sisters Isabella and Caroline sailed first class on ss Cestrian from Liverpool to New Orleans where they arrived on 11 November and were met by George¹³. In 1915 they visited Mexico²⁰. On 24th December 1917 Isabella crossed from Mexico to Texas at Eagle Pass and was met by George¹⁴. She seems not to have returned to Mexico but Caroline remained there with Lucy and Frederick on their ranch at Mariposa. There, on 2nd May 1918, Lucy, Frederick, Garry and Caroline were murdered by a group of Mexicans. The event is the subject of Solveig Turpin's book.

Richard, Isabella and George remained in Texas and Mexico. I do not know where or when Richard died. Isabella died in San Antonio, Texas, on 6th September 1918; George died in Múzquiz, Mexico, on 16th June 1924. Samuel died on 25th August 1925 at 52, Francis Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.

Figure 1. The Mexico-USA border showing places relevant to the Hillcoat-Le Mare activities²¹.



Acknowledgements.

I am grateful to David Stewart for information on the marriages of Samuel Bellhouse Le Mare. David is a great-grandson of John Henry Broadbent whose sister, Emily Elizabeth, married first Thomas Allen Britton and second Bellhouse.

19 Passenger list, www.ancestry.co.uk

20 Chronology of Frederick Hillcoat's life.

21 *The Times Survey Atlas of the World, 1920.*

Appendix

The following account of the murders and how the ranch came to Freddue Hillcoat is among the Hillcoat Papers. I constructed the family tree of Major-General Edward Cresap Ord.

Per The Times, Wednesday, 8th. May 1918, page 5:

MURDERED BY MEXICAN BANDITS

NEW YORK, May 7, — A telegram from Eagle Pass, Texas, states that, according to a dispatch from La Mariposa, Mexican bandits murdered four British subjects there last Thursday. Their names are given as Miss C. LeMare, Mrs. Frederick Hillcoat, Mr. Frederick Hillcoat, and their son, Jerry Hillcoat. — Reuter.

Per The Cresap Society, Vol. 50, No. 2, Whole Number 396, April 1990.

“The Hillcoat Murders”.

INTRODUCTION

Frederick Hillcoat was appointed the first Postmaster of the newly established Post Office which was named for him August 15, 1890. The Hillcoat Post Office was located about 20 miles in a direct line NE of Brackettville, and about one half mile from the west bank of the West Prong of the Nueces River on some of the most rugged terrain in that part of Kinny county.

The following episode has more-or-less been exempt from the annals of history. It may not have been told had it not involved the lives of individuals who were related through kinship and friendship to two prominent military generals of that time.

Charles G. Downing of Fort Clark, Brackettville, Texas, contributed the article.

THE HILLCOAT MURDERS

The London Times of May 8, 1918 contained a brief article reporting that bandits had murdered four British subjects in Mexico. The murders occurred on Thursday, May 2, 1918, and the names of the four victims were given as Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Hillcoat, their son Jerry Hillcoat, and Miss C. LeMare, sister of Mrs. Hillcoat. The “Times” failed to note that 22-year-old Jerry Hillcoat was properly called Garesche Ord Hillcoat, and that he was a grandson of the late Major General

Edward Otho Cresap Ord, U.S.A. (1818 – 1883)

The murders took place on the 50,000-acre Hillcoat ranchⁱ in a remote area of the high desert state of Coahuila. To explain how the Hillcoats became ranchers in Mexico leads to the story of two generals who faced one another in battle across the troubled Mexican –American border. Their actions could very well determine the issue of peace or war between the two nations.

It was in 1875 that General E.O.C. Ord assumed command of the Military Department of Texas, with headquarters in San Antonio. Immediately he faced a serious problem of lawlessness on the international frontier. On the lower Rio Grande, armed parties of bandits had for years crossed over to the ranches on the American side to steal cattle and to drive them across the border to sanctuary in Mexico. On the upper Rio Grande above Laredo savage Indians crossed the mountains of Coahuila and Chihuahua murdering settlers and driving their cattle into Mexico. The Mexican Government, torn by revolution, was unable to exert its authority over the lawless bands. General Ord was determined to stop the raiding and received tactic approval from his superiors to send his forces into Mexico in hot pursuit of the raiders. There were outcries from the Mexican people and authorities condemning the crossing as violations of Mexican sovereignty and threatening resistance by Mexican forces.

In 1876, Porfirio Diaz occupied Mexico City and proclaimed himself provisional president. The following year there was a new administration in Washington with the inauguration of Rutherford B. Hayes. Hayes openly ordered Ord to stop the raids into Texas, even if it meant occasional crossings into Mexico. The American President withheld recognition of the Diaz Government until the Mexican authorities should act to prevent the raids. Spurred by the American stand, Diaz sent General Geronimo Trevino (Jerónimo Treviño), an able commander, to the border to suppress the raids. Trevino, 38 years old, was a member of a prominent and wealthy family.

General Ord took the initiative and by arrangement crossed at Piedras Negras to confer with Trevino. The two agreed to cooperate in suppressing the lawless elements. Ord continued to have his troops cross the border discretely, while Trevino aggressive went after bandits and savage Indians on the Mexican side. The result was the pacification of the border.

In the course of the cooperative efforts with General Ord, General Trevino had visited Texas and had met Ord's 23-year-old daughter, Roberta Augusta Ord, who was described as "blond and dazzling beautiful" as well as being "esteemed for her simplicity and goodness of heart". As a contemporary account phrased it, Bertie's "many personal charms and high womanly qualities smote the heart of the military chieftain". Geronimo and Bertie were married in San Antonio on July 20, 1880.

General Ord retired in the latter part of 1880 and went to Mexico as a civil engineer for American railroad interests. By the time of his arrival there, Trevino was serving as Minister of war in the Mexican government.

i El Silencio

Trevino owned a vast estate, possibly over a million acres of desert land in Coahuila. He offered to set up his father-in-law as a rancher in a portion of this vast estate, but General Ord turned down the generous offer.

Bertie Trevino's health declined, and General Trevino resigned his cabinet post and resumed his old command in Northern Mexico. There, in 1882, Bertie gave birth to a son appropriately named Geronimo Eduardo de Trevino y Ord, also called by General Ord "the international baby". Porfirio Diaz himself was the infant's godfather. Bertie did not live long after the birth of her son and died in 1883 at the age of 27. General Ord, returning from a visit to the United States, was stricken with yellow fever and died in Havana, Cuba, in 1883, in his sixty-fifth year.

MARY MERCER ORD, Bertie's younger sister was married in 1892 to FREDERICK HILLCOAT, an Englishman. They and other members of the Ord family in San Antonio had kept in touch with General Trevino over the years. The Hillcoats received from the General, either by purchase or as a gift, a ranch of 50,000 acres in a remote area of the Trevino holdings.

A son was born to the Hillcoats in 1896 and was given the name GARESCHE Ord after Mary Mercer's favorite brother who was a year younger than she. This brother, Lieutenant Garesche Ord, was killed in 1898 at San Juan Hill. The hopes and dreams of the Hillcoats were dashed by Mary's untimely death in 1899 at the age of only thirty-four. Frederick Hillcoat remarried, and it was his second wife, her sister, and his young son who were murdered in 1918.

The Hillcoats lived on their 50,000-acre ranch in a house that Frederick Hillcoat himself built. They raised goats and sheep and annually made a trip of about 120 miles to the town of Muzquiz, Coahuila, to sell the products of the ranch. Returning from their journey in 1918, they were followed back to their isolated home by a bandit named Felipe Muzquiz and his band of robbers.

Shortly after the Hillcoats returned home a knock was heard at the door. Hillcoat answered and found one of the band there, who told him that Muzquiz wanted to talk to him. Hillcoat refused, and the bandit went back to report to his leader. Shortly, there was a second knock. Instead of answering the door, Hillcoat positioned himself so that he could see the door. The same bandit was there, but this time with a revolver in hand. Hillcoat shot the man dead with his rifle.

The other bandits attacked the house and the firing became general on both sides. Garesche, the son, dropped to his knees in the open front door, firing until he was shot down by the attackers. Quickly all four in the house were dispatched by the greater firepower of the bandits. The bodies of the two men and the two women were thrown into the well.

These events would have gone unreported had it not been for a Mexican goat herder who worked for Hillcoat. This individual, hidden across a ravine in front of the house, witnessed the entire episode.

Unknown to Felipe Muzquiz and his band, as they traveled to the Hillcoat ranch, they were being pursued by a detachment of Los Federales, a military police mounted force that was sent to apprehend the bandits for their previous crimes.

After the Hillcoat murders, Muzquiz and his band headed for Santo Domingo ranch, which also belonged to Trevino, and they camped there. Los Federales surprised them and in the ensuing battle killed all of them except Felipe Muzquiz, who they mortally wounded.

The commander of the federal troops sent a soldier to La Babia, Trevino's home ranch, to telegraph the town of Muzquiz with report of the battle with the bandits and ask if they should put Felipe in a wagon and bring him to Muzquiz. The commander there asked how badly Felipe was wounded, "Mortally" was the reply, so the commander directed that Felipe should be allowed to die at the Santo Domingo, and there he expiredⁱⁱ soon after.

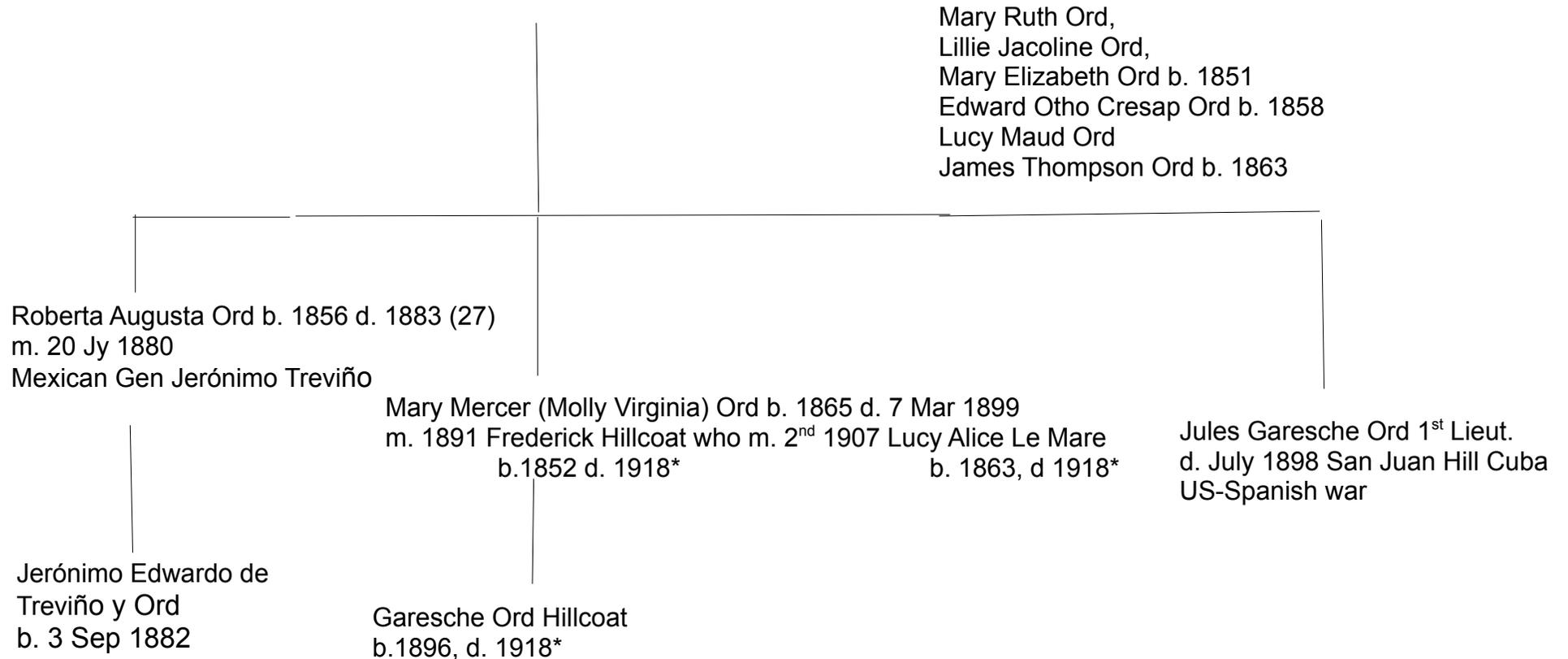
Sources:

1. Information given to Charles G. Downing by his father-in-law, Harvey Polly, who lived for 33 years on a ranch in Mexico that once was part of the Trevino Land and bordered the Hillcoat ranch. Downing, a bookseller of Brackettville, Texas, lives on the Fort Clark reservation, now a private community.
2. Copy of a letter from Edward S. Wallace, noted author of Texas Border lore, written to Ben Pingenot, Charles G. Downing's neighbor.

ii *Charlie Sellers, who worked for George Myers (sp?) remembers a story when Felipe Muzquiz was wounded by the Mexican soldiers. Felipe had abducted Tom Barksdale, Myers ranch manager, and had asked a big ransom for him. Since Myers was supposed to be a tightwad, everybody said he wouldn't give Felipe a dollar for setting Tom free. Since Felipe was already wounded, he was taken to the Rancho El Conejo, where he was going to be executed. Tom Barksdale asked the captain if he could go home and the captain said that he would have to be a witness at Felipe's execution first. The soldiers sat him down on a small chair and blindfolded him before he was shot.*

The relationship of Frederick Hillcoat to Jerónimo Treviño from whom Freddie acquired his Mexican ranch by gift or purchase

US Major Gen Edward Otho Cresap Ord m. Mary Mercer Thompson (b. Culpeper VA 1831 d. 15 Jun 1894 San Antonio Texas).
b. 18 Oct 1818 d. 22 Jy 1883 Cuba Yellow fever. Thirteen children including



* Hillcoat murders. Lucy's sister, Caroline Burden Le Mare, was also killed.