

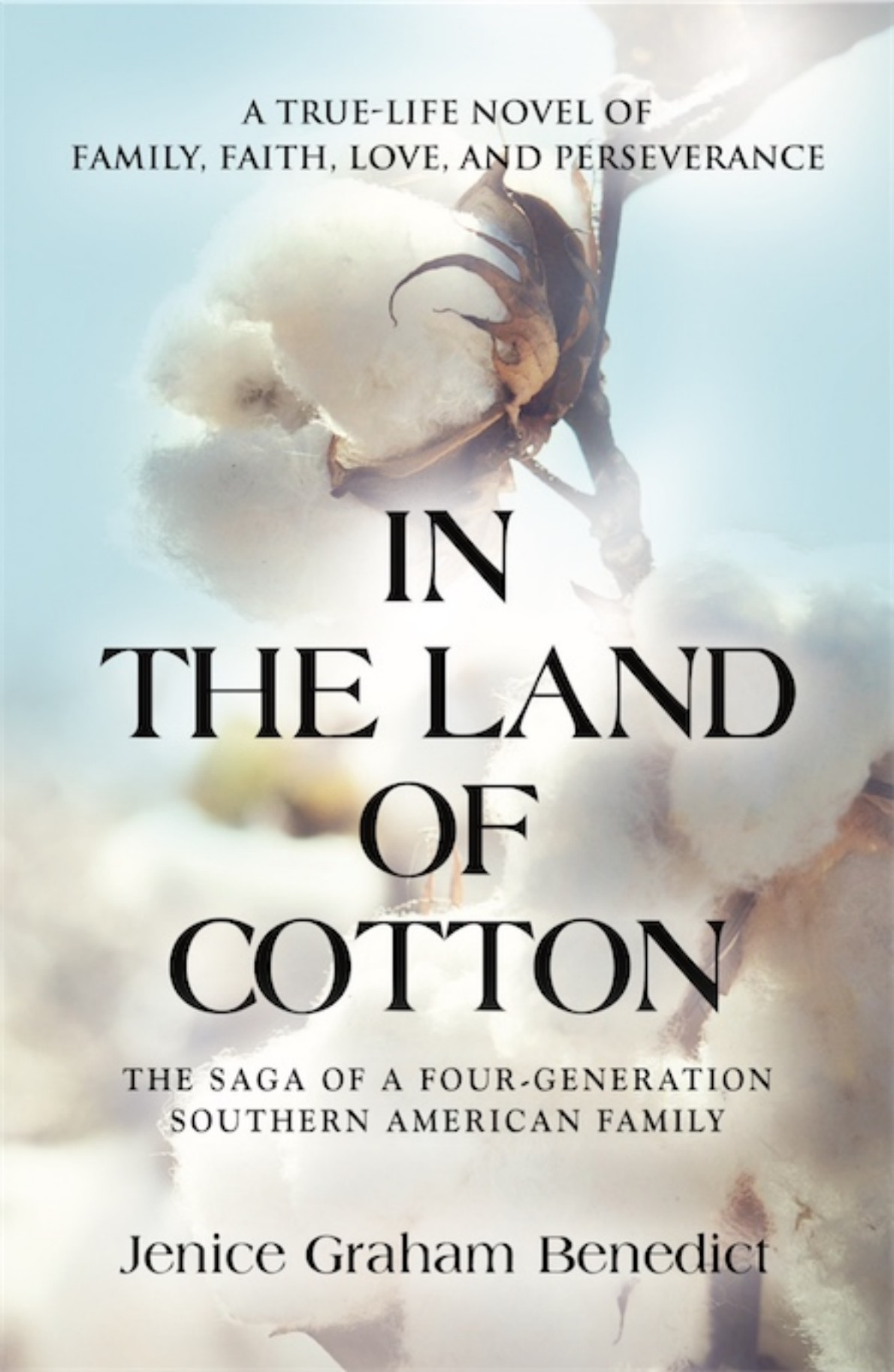
Jenice Graham Benedict's true-life epic spans a hundred years beginning with her great-great-grandfather, an Alabama Confederate soldier, and continues with her Southern family through six other protagonists. Each of the novel's characters typifies a segment of the American dream, living it in their own way, along with their great sacrifices.

IN THE LAND OF COTTON
A True-Life Novel of
Family, Faith, Love, and Perseverance
by Jenice Graham Benedict

Order the complete book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/10799.html?s=pdf>

or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.



A TRUE-LIFE NOVEL OF
FAMILY, FAITH, LOVE, AND PERSEVERANCE

IN
THE LAND
OF
COTTON

THE SAGA OF A FOUR-GENERATION
SOUTHERN AMERICAN FAMILY

Jenice Graham Benedict

Copyright © 2020 Jenice Graham Benedict

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-64718-019-5

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-64718-020-1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

This is a work of historical fiction, based on actual persons and events. The author has taken creative liberty with many details to enhance the reader's experience.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Graham Benedict, Jenice

IN THE LAND OF COTTON: A True-Life Novel of Family, Faith,
Love, and Perseverance by Jenice Graham Benedict

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019918194

Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2020

IN THE LAND OF COTTON
Hancock-Boone-Graham
A Five Generation Flow Chart

Andrew Jackson Hancock, Sr. (b. 1836)
and spouse
Talitha Josephine Polk Hancock (b 1841)



Andrew J. Hancock, Jr (b. 1860)
and spouse
Mary Elizabeth McKinnon Hancock (b. 1859)

Marcus Causby Boon (b. 1868)
and spouse
California (Callie) Crabtree Boon (b. 1869)



Ruby Mae Hancock
Boone (b. 1892)

Married
Their Children

Rev. Leo Mark Boone
(b. 1892)

Jean Boone Graham (b. 1928)
and spouse
Joseph B. Graham

Dr. Rayford Leo Boone (b. 1917)
and spouse
Jane Nelms Boone

Their Children

Their Children

Dr. Joe M. Graham

Jenice Graham

Kenneth Boone

Laura Boone

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR’S NOTE TO THE READER	xvii
PART I ~ PRIVATE ANDREW JACKSON HANCOCK - b.1836 - d.1862	1
PATROLLING NEAR CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE Morning of July 22, 1862.....	3
BASE CAMP ~ July 23, 1862.....	9
HILLIARD’S LEGION AND CAMP TALK ~ the evening of July 24, 1862	14
CHECKING THE HORSES ~ late evening July 24, 1862.....	22
THINKING ABOUT HOME ~ July 26, 1862.....	25
ANOTHER SKIRMISH ~ July 28, 1862	28
A BIG STORM IS BREWING ~ the evening of July 28, 1862	34
DIG IN AND OCCUPY! ~ July 31, 1862, Chattanooga, Tennessee	39
THE DAY OF THE CENSUS ~ Friday, August 1, 1862, Chattanooga, Tennessee.....	41
LEAVING CHATTANOOGA ~ Monday, August 4, 1862	43
PART II ~ THE MEMORIES OF TALITHA JOSEPHINE HANCOCK b.1841 - d.1884 and her son, A.J. HANCOCK JR. b.1860 – d.1939	49
LIFE WAS GOOD UNTIL THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES	51
A WAR-TORN COUNTRY	54
RECONSTRUCTION IS WHAT THEY CALLED IT	57
THE POSSIBILITY OF BANKRUPTCY	60
THEY CALLED HIM AN ORPHAN	63
THE HELPLESS	65
THE PROBATE	67
MOVING ON.....	69
STRIVING TO FLOURISH.....	71
A.J. HANCOCK, A COTTON FARMER IN TEXAS ~ 1934.....	73
PART III ~ MARCUS BOON b.1868 - d.1945 AND CALIFORNIA CRABTREE BOON b.1869 – d.1908	83
CALLIE AND MARCUS BOON’S ROOTS.....	85
CALLIE’S AUTOGRAPH BOOK ~ 1886	89
HOMESTEADING A TEXAS CLAIM ~ 1891	93
BUILDING A SODDIE ~ 1891-1892	98
STRUGGLES ON THE LLANO ESTACADO ~ 1892.....	102
QUITCLAIM ~ January 30, 1893	105

CALLIE AND MARCUS MOVE BACK TO FAMILIAR COUNTRY ~ 1893-1908.....	109
BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL! ~ June 21, 1908	112
PART IV ~ THE PREACHER AND HIS WIFE ~ Reverend Mark Leo Boone b.1892 – d.1977 and Ruby Mae Hancock Boone b.1892 – d.1972	119
BROTHER MARK LEO BOON, THE CIRCUIT RIDER PREACHER ~ 1909-1914.....	121
MISS RUBIE MAE HANCOCK ~ 1913	130
THE REVIVAL ~ 1913.....	137
LEO BOON COURTS MISS RUBIE MAE HANCOCK ~ 1913.....	145
PLEDGING COMMITMENT ~ the winter of 1914	148
NO LONGER TWO, BUT ONE ~ the summer of 1914	151
MRS. BOON ~ the autumn of 1915	154
LEARNING TO BE A MINISTER’S WIFE ~ 1916-1917	159
REV. BOON AND THE SELECTIVE SERVICE ~ 1916-1917	163
RUBIE AND LEO BECOME PARENTS ~ 1917	168
WORLD WAR AND SPANISH FLU ~ 1917-1919	173
BROTHER BOON AND HIS CIRCUIT ~ 1919	177
THE BOONS AND THE LORD’S FURNITURE ~ 1919.....	182
REVEREND BOONE FACES GREAT CHANGES ~ 1919-1925	187
RUBIE, A BUSY WIFE AND MOTHER ~ 1919-1925	192
GOING HOG WILD!.....	197
FROM A CIRCUIT RIDER TO MINISTER ~ 1927-1928.....	201
ANYTHING SEEMED POSSIBLE ~ 1927-1928	204
RUBIE’S BIG SURPRISE ~ 1928-1929.....	208
CHEWED UP AND SPIT OUT!.....	212
THE STOCK MARKET FALL OF 1929.....	214
MOVING FROM EDDY, MAYPEARL, THEN WEST, TEXAS ~ 1930-1932.....	219
THE CHURCH SUSTAINS MANY ~ 1933	224
EXPECTATIONS	226
THE NEW DEAL ~ 1933-1934	230
ON TO VALERA, TEXAS ~ 1935.....	235
RUBIE’S PARTY ~ 1935	242
THE DEPRESSION CONTINUES.....	245
HARD TIMES IN VALERA ~ 1936-1937	247
RESTLESS RUBIE	254
TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON ~ 1937	261
THE YEARS FLY BY ~ 1938-1951	270
NOT SPRING CHICKENS ANYMORE! ~ 1952-1955	281
IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH ~ 1955-1959	283

IN THE LAND OF COTTON

A DECADE OF GOLDEN YEARS ~ Houston, Texas 1959-1969	288
A WORLD NEVER IMAGINED ~ 1977	294
BLESSED ASSURANCE ~ October 23, 1977	306
QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION	313

MISS RUBIE MAE HANCOCK ~ 1913



**(Front row - Andrew J. Hancock and Mary McKinnon Hancock
Children; back L to R – Ruby (Rubie), Marvin, Zillah, Johnnie, Gussie,
Sannie, Bill (Willie)**

While riding in the back of her father's buckboard wagon, Rubie and her sisters overheard her father explain to her brothers, "Gentle rain, then many days of continuous sunshine is the best for growin' cotton. Hot days produce the heat required for the bolls to mature, then they need pickin' fast without delay."

Rubie Mae Hancock felt annoyed at her father for insisting she and her siblings pick cotton in the scorching fields along with the hired help. They had been doing the backbreaking work every day for weeks without even a thank you from him, and her hands were swollen and calloused.

Rubie knew storms always presented a problem when the cotton harvest approached. The white cotton fibers had to be picked out of the ripe, stickered bolls before the late summer hurricane storms arrived, driven in from the Gulf of Mexico. If substantial rain and wind came to De Leon, Texas before the boll harvest, the rainwater would make the cotton heads heavy, causing them to fall to the ground and rot before the pickers could get through the sticky mud to pick them. Additionally, the threat of the pesky boll weevil beetle invading the farmland was always at hand. Because of these ever-changing factors, the Hancock family had to toil and work as fast as they could around the clock to harvest their cotton until the job was complete.

Not opposed to working hard, twenty-year-old Rubie preferred household duties to field jobs. She favored sewing with her mother or even washing the heaviest household laundry, but the labor of cotton reaping was what the Hancock children dutifully endured to help their father with his livelihood. He was a hard-working cotton farmer, but he couldn't afford to pay full-time, salaried farm tenants, so all the Hancock children worked the fields.

“Lordy Mercy, it’s hotter than blue blazes out here this afternoon.” Rubie was sweating profusely. She looked over at her younger sisters working in the dirt rows beside her. “I feel like I’ve been chewed up and spit out!”

Zillah chuckled and stood up, feigning feminine exaggeration. “I don’t think this kind of work is ladylike for me. Southern girls are not to sweat like this . . . at least not day, after day, after day!”

“Shhh! Father’s gonna tan your hide if he hears or knows you complain,” Gussie reminded her older sisters.

“Gussie, he’s plowin’ with the mules and not payin’ us no mind right now,” Rubie quipped to the thirteen-year-old. “So, don’t you go

worryin' about us bein' a burr in his saddle." She added, "We're gettin' the job done . . . and mighty quick, too."

Gussie relaxed somewhat. "Well, you know Father. He's really countin' on this round of harvest bein' a big yield."

They knew their stern father, and with that thought, the three went back to work, bending down to the steaming, straight rows.

The Hancock family knew their cotton fields had to be picked by hand, three to four times during each harvest season, the bolls on the plants maturing at different rates. They understood they couldn't simply leave the early-maturing bolls on the plants until the plants all matured as the quality of the cotton declined as soon as the star-shaped bolls opened. Additionally, the pesky boll weevil beetle had begun to invade the farmlands of De Leon the past couple of years, and it was harder for the local farmers to make a profit raising cotton.

Rubie's mind wandered over memories of when she was thirteen years old, the age of her sister, Gussie. Her parents, A.J. and Mary McKinnon Hancock, boldly moved their family of nine by train from Alabama to De Leon. Many Alabamians moved to Texas after the Civil War because of the economic damage to the farming communities throughout the languished and vanished South. Rubie's father was among those who hoped to find a better lifestyle for his family in Texas by buying contiguous, fertile acres to cultivate his cash crop. Settling in Comanche County, the seasoned Alabama farmer planted his cotton fields every spring, and the family toiled continuously on their Texas farmland to make ends meet.

Rubie Mae and her sister Zillah had only attended their one-room school to eighth grade, which wasn't unusual for most women of their rural and economic status. Instead of attending the higher grades of school, the girls were expected to help in the house every day with sewing, cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and managing the preservation of food for the family. Additionally, the Hancock

girls were to assist their father with farming and barn chores whenever requested.

Lately, there had been a discussion in town about the recent child labor laws passed by Congress, banning hiring children under the age of fourteen to work in factories, prohibiting children from working at night, and limiting their working hours. But these reforms didn't seem to apply to the offspring in rural agricultural areas, so using youth labor remained common and expected on family farms. To many, education wasn't as important as two hands working to make an income.

While laboring in the hot, sweltering fields, Rubie thought about all kinds of ideas to entertain herself while she pulled the heavy bag of cotton through the dirt rows. Being musically inclined, she would sing her favorite hymns from church—"Amazing Grace," "Blessed Assurance," "Stand Up for Jesus," and many others. Sometimes, she recalled songs she heard in Alabama sung by scores of Negro tenant workers on cotton farms. These catchy melodies would endlessly repeat in her head, matching the rhythmic, repetitive motions of Rubie's hands pulling cotton off the heavy-headed plants.

Rubie began to sing the catchy words from an old field-hand song she learned as a child.

Bend down, turn around,
Pick a bale of cotton.
Bend down turn around,
Pick a bale a day.
Oh Lordy, pick a bale of cotton.
Oh Lordy, pick a bale a day.

Another way Rubie passed the time was to think of enjoyable town gatherings, church picnics, and revivals. She thought of new embroidery creations she wanted to sew and pie baking contests she planned to enter at the county fair. Often, Rubie would daydream

about the qualities she'd want in a man to marry someday. She and her two sisters would chatter endlessly about the local young men and a variety of other subjects while they were working together in the sweltering, humid cotton fields.

“Zillah, how far have you and Mama gotten on sewin’ your new blue dress?” Rubie questioned her younger sister.

Zillah stood up and answered while wiping her brow in the blazing sun with her long sleeve. “I only have the hem to finish, then I’m ready to be admired at church this Sunday.”

The sisters giggled at Zillah’s comment.

“You will be pretty as a picture!” Gussie complimented Zillah. “That new beau of yours will be like a grinnin’ possum lookin’ at you in your lovely lady dress.”

Zillah put her hands up to her hair, pretending to coif her curls and was quick to boast. “You are right, Gussie . . . he will! But I might not even give him the time of day on Sunday. I heard a young preacher is comin’ to town with handsome Mr. Scott for the revival in a couple of weeks.”

Gussie and Rubie laughed at Zillah even more.

Zillah then looked at her older sister and nagged, “My Dear Rubie, you better stop laughin’ and get busy findin’ yourself a good husband. You know you should get married before I do, right? You’re already twenty years old, and you aren’t gettin’ any younger. I don’t want to wait too long for you to get married before it’s my turn to fall in love. We don’t want to be ol’ maids, do we?”

Rubie stopped working and stood up straight. Feeling sarcastic, she gestured grandiosely with her arms outstretched to the cotton fields and quipped back at her two sisters.

“I haven’t found a suitable, handsome, rich, wonderful beau to take me away from these magnificent cotton fields yet!”

Her sisters snickered at her comedic gestures.

Rubie dropped her arms. “I’m still waitin’ for Mr. Wonderful.” Making fists, she put them on each hip. “I know one thing for sure. I do not want to get moon-eyed and go marryin’ a farmer who’s tight as a clothesline.” She stomped her foot. “And I never, ever want to harvest another crop of cotton with my hands again in my life.”

Her sisters agreed with Rubie, then they went back to pulling the white, fluffy heads off the prickly foliage. Rubie finished her row and walked around to the next endless line of plants while adjusting the wide sash of the cotton sack across her chest and shoulder. She paused and looked across the field and saw two of her four brothers toiling in the searing sun with several hired white and Negro field hands. Rubie changed the tilt of her sun hat over her face to protect her light skin from the piercing heat rays and adjusted her long skirt and her long sleeves, making sure her arms remained covered.

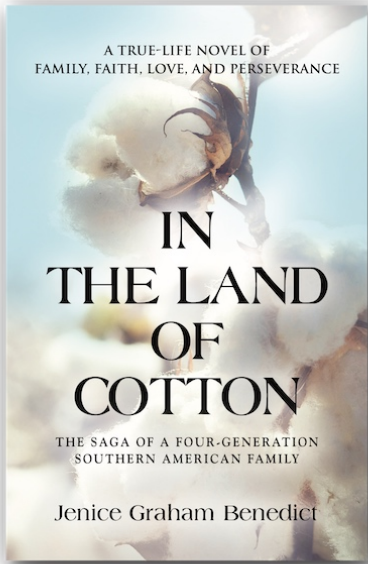
In aggravated resignation, Rubie looked down at her sore, coarse hands. She wished she had a pair of leather gloves. Slowly, she pulled more of the snowy fibers off the pointy bolls in skillful repetition, repeating the words of the harvest song in her mind.

Bend down, turn around,
Pick a bale of cotton.
Bend down turn around,
Pick a bale a day.

Still sweating profusely in the humid heat, Rubie daydreamed while she toiled. She heard her sisters prattling nonstop but she didn’t pay attention to what they were saying. She willed herself to be happier while sweltering through the hot work, imagining owning new clothing in her favorite color, pink.

I have saved some of my egg money this year and think I have enough to buy a new skirt from the Sears and Roebuck mail-order catalog. I'll check to see if it can be delivered in time for the next church revival.

With the happy anticipation of wearing something pretty, Rubie couldn't wait to attend the community revival. She continued to consider the new improvements to her churchgoing wardrobe and the festivities ahead. The image of her wearing new, fashionable pink clothing brought a big smile to Rubie's face while she worked the rest of the day under the hot, blazing, Texas sun.



Jenice Graham Benedict's true-life epic spans a hundred years beginning with her great-great-grandfather, an Alabama Confederate soldier, and continues with her Southern family through six other protagonists. Each of the novel's characters typifies a segment of the American dream, living it in their own way, along with their great sacrifices.

IN THE LAND OF COTTON
A True-Life Novel of
Family, Faith, Love, and Perseverance
by Jenice Graham Benedict

Order the complete book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/10799.html?s=pdf>

or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.