



Bill Pickett

William Pickett, also known as Bill, was born on December 5, 1870 in Williamson County, Texas. He was the second of 13 children. His parents were Thomas Jefferson Pickett and Mary (Janie) Virginia Elizabeth Gilbert. Bill went to school until he was in the fifth grade. After that he quit and left to become a full-time ranch hand on a cattle ranch. He wanted to get better at his riding and roping skills. He worked to become a skilled horseman. Bill invented a way of wrestling bulls called “bulldogging.” To do this, he would jump on the bull’s back, twist its horns, and bite its upper lip in the manner of a cattle dog. Pickett began performing “bulldogging” at county fairs, carnivals, and rodeos.

On December 2, 1890, Bill married Maggie Turner. He and his wife had nine children. To support his big family, he started performing more and more. People loved to watch him wrestle bulls. He was one of the best! He was as tough as anyone had seen. This made the crowds want to come see him.

In 1907 he joined the Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch Wild West Show in Oklahoma. People called him “The Dusky Demon”. He traveled all over with the show. Because African Americans were often not allowed in rodeos, Bill was said to be Mexican or Native American so that he could perform.

He retired in 1916, but Bill continued to work as a cowboy and showman a little bit. He worked until the time he was kicked in the head by a horse. He died a short while later. In 1971 Pickett was the first African American to become a part of the National Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame. He is definitely one of the most well-known cowboys that have ever lived.

(Information adapted from www.biography.yourdictionary.com)