



ECHOES

A PUBLICATION OF
FRANKLIN COUNTY
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

OUR MISSION:
"To Preserve our Natural
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Military Exhibit Grand Opening

5.25.26 **FRANKLIN COUNTY SERVES:**
CELEBRATING FRANKLIN COUNTY'S SERVICE TO AMERICA

Details on page 5

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Alicia Daberkow

We are just around the corner from the grand opening of our new military exhibit, which is set to debut this **Memorial Day, May 25, 2026**. Ceremonies will commence at 2:00pm with a ribbon cutting inside the Fire Station Museum at 107 Scott Street, Mt. Vernon, Texas. Following will be a reception and walk-throughs of the new exhibit.

To introduce you to this momentous occasion, I sat down with the exhibit curator, Mike Millender, to gain his perspective on the vision for this project.

AD: Why a military exhibit?

MM: Over the past year, military items that were donated to our association were accessioned into the new archival facility. Seeing them all together made us realize they are historically significant. We have displayed uniforms before, but not with this much detail.

AD: What makes it historically significant?

MM: Thousands of Franklin County residents have served in the military. During WWII alone, more than 900 men and women answered the call to serve. The uniforms on display represent a range of military functions.

AD: What can we learn from the uniforms that we don't already know?

MM: When veterans return from the service, they try to pick up their lives where they left off. They start families and careers, and serve their communities. Many do not talk about their service. They live among us, but we sometimes have no idea what they endured for our freedom. Their decorated uniforms tell their stories. Bronze Stars, Silver Stars, Distinguished Flying Crosses, and commendations of all kinds tell of actions above and beyond the call of duty. Combat Infantry Badges tell of enemy engagements. Campaign medals tell of service on every front. Service stripes, overseas bars, unit patches, unit presidential citations, marksmanship badges. They all tell a story. We are exhibiting only 22 uniforms. Expand that to the thousands that we know served, and we can get a sense of Franklin County's service to the United States.

AD: What has been your process for gathering information about the soldiers in our exhibit?

MM: We begin with information supplied by their families. Full name, date of birth, place of birth, approximate service dates, etc. Rank and unit usually comes from their uniforms. Some information (DD214s) comes from our genealogy society. Then we go to the internet. Requests were submitted to the national archive (NARA) for service records for every soldier. Online military forums provided a great deal of information. We have a mountain of information for some soldiers, and nothing for at least one soldier, except a name and rank, but we continue to look.



AD: What branches of service do our uniforms represent?

MM: We have a submariner, several combat infantrymen, sailors and Naval officers, heavy equipment drivers, a seabee, a mortar team member, a soldier that jumped out of perfectly good aircraft (Airborne), a nurse, a Red Cross volunteer, a jet pilot (Vietnam), a blimp pilot (WW2), and even a top secret WW2 code breaker. Ranks range from Sergeant to Lieutenant Colonel.

AD: Are the uniforms completely original?

MM: The uniforms, and most of the accessories are original; however, we did add a very few things for visual affect. We added shoes and socks to every mannequin. They looked funny without them. A white shirt and suspenders were added to Major Stewart's dress uniform. I could not get his pants to stay up without the suspenders. I added ribbon racks to two uniforms based on information in the soldier's DD214s. I added original US lapel pins to two uniforms. Finally, I added to the Red Cross uniform the lapel and hat pin which were supplied by the official Red Cross archivist, Shirley Powers, who also dated the uniform for us and approved the final assembly.

AD: What exactly is a DD214?

MM: A DD214 is a soldier's discharge record which includes service dates, qualifications, service or social security number, awards (medals), discharge condition (honorable, general) and so on. A DD214 is required for most veterans benefits, and/or burial in a national cemetery, such as Arlington. It is an important document for veterans.

AD: Is there a significant display that stands out in your mind?

MM: That has to be Captain Van Der Wal. As a lieutenant, he was stationed at Bletchley Park where the German enigma code was broken. His family described him as a cryptographer, but his actual assignment was classified for 50 years. He is named in a document that was declassified in the late 1990s. He and three other Ameri-

cans were part of the team that worked on the 'Fish Problem'—the secret code that the German High Command (OKW) used to send battle orders to their field generals during WWII.

AD: Tell me about the WAC.

MM: Virginia Birdsong (McCarrey) was born in Franklin County, Texas and went to nursing school in Paris, Texas. She entered the Women's Army Corps as a commissioned officer (2nd lieutenant) and promoted once to 1st lieutenant during the war. Virginia took very good care of her uniform. Her mannequin is only 2 inches taller than she was, and apparently about the same size otherwise. Seeing her in that uniform gives us an idea why Sergeant McCarrey was willing to leave his native Chicago and spend the rest of his life in Mount Vernon. His uniform is displayed upstairs.

AD: I'm thinking of a funny...

MM: The reporters from the Dallas Morning News, right? Marine Schuehle's mannequin was delivered on the same day as an FCHA board meeting. I did my best to get him assembled and dressed, but to no avail. By meeting time, I had his pants installed but a stuck zipper kept me from getting them pulled up. In the interest of modesty, I turned him to face the cabinet on the east wall. For this particular meeting, the president of our association, B.F. Hicks, invited two reporters from the Dallas Morning News. It was a full room, and the reporters were seated in the chairs next to the mannequin. That placed one of them face to face (cheek to cheek?) with a mannequin's backside. She stayed like that the entire meeting (bless her heart).

AD: Were there guidelines to follow in assembling the exhibit?

MM: Only two. Represent every family that donated if possible, and stay within our budget unless we had board approval. Fortunately, the **American Legion—Post 243 Mount Vernon** provided a very generous contribution, which made a huge difference in what we were able to accomplish. Thank you!

AD: Where did the relics and uniforms come from?

MM: The uniforms originally belonged to long-time Mount Vernon residents, or soldiers with close ties to Mount Vernon residents. Most items were donated in the 1990s or early 2000s.

AD: What happens if someone offers to donate grandpa's uniform?

MM: It is our board's policy to consider items on a donation-only basis (meaning no lending or borrowing).

Once an item goes through the accession process, it might take a while for us to curate the item to be put on display. When items are not on display, they will be inventoried, stored, and protected in the Franklin County Historical Association's new archival facility. We anticipate hearing from others about their family items, and look forward to rotating relics on display over time.

AD: This has been a great introduction, Mike. And we certainly appreciate your vision and passion for this new exhibit. Any final thoughts?

MM: The exhibit was designed and assembled by a talented and dedicated team, with input by members of the board and our executive director. Special thanks to Randy Ritter—His assistance was invaluable in assembling this exhibit. We are proud of it. We are proud of our veterans. Come visit us!

Our museum has included some memorabilia as part of the displays—there is a collection of letters home from a soldier to his sweetheart. We also have a large display of relics from the fighting fields, including, but not limited to, helmets, tactical gear, and ordinance carriers. There is a box of souvenirs taken home from enemy lines. Some artifacts are not displayed due to their perceived difficult content. We have taken that into consideration and make the box of contents viewable upon request.

There are a variety of elements to this military exhibit that contribute to a comprehensive look at life during wartime. This includes a special gallery of posters that significantly shaped public opinion, mobilized populations, and influenced everyday behavior. Far from decoration, these works of art have influenced history and have been extensively examined within cultural frameworks.

Mary Lou Russell and her husband Jerald Mowery beautifully curated our collection of wartime posters. Our interview became emotional, because it meant something—perhaps a time lost on past generations.

AD: What was your inspiration for the military art gallery?

MLR: I was born before Pearl Harbor, so I grew up in the late 1940s and 1950s which was a beautiful and patriotic time in our country's history. The gallery represents America's patriotism during that period.

JM: We had people who signed up regardless of their background: it was a common cause. People pulled together to do what they could. It reflects an amazing human endeavor and effort on the American front.

MLR: We chose poster art that reflected the heart of the war effort. Over the years, I have spent a lot of time in art galleries. Art is like literature, they go hand in hand. It reflects a period of time.

AD: Jerald, you are a talented wood worker, and you have built custom frames for these posters in our military exhibit.

JM: Well, I started in high school woodshop, and it just continued as a hobby. Over time, I've collected proper tools which have allowed me to build these frames.

MLR: Jerald and I are a team, and we work together on everything. We have tirelessly committed ourselves to the reinvigoration and maintenance of the Cotton Belt Depot—it's our baby.

JM: It's true. Our preacher says, whenever you see Mary Lou, Jerald's not far behind.

AD: What keeps you coming back to serve with Franklin County Historical Association?

MLR: I believe in what we are doing for our county and community. The coming together is what makes us different. You do it because it's what your heart tells you to do.

JM: I have found purpose in giving back to my community by helping preserve our history.



Mary Lou Russell & Jerald Mowery have served with the Franklin County Historical Association for twenty years. At the beginning of their tenure with the association, Mary Lou was determined to develop a history museum for Mount Vernon. She serves as exhibit chair. Her call to us: "You must have history, you must teach your children."

...Military Exhibit: Franklin County Serves (continued)

We end our coverage on the upcoming military exhibit with a special discovery. A couple months ago, I was in our archival building reviewing some inventory. I had been searching for wartime news coverage and stumbled across, in my opinion, the ultimate relic. The yellowed pages of the *Mount Vernon Optic-Herald* special edition newspaper dated October 15, 1943, are more than ink on paper—they are a time capsule of a community at war. This 32-page spread, dedicated entirely to the servicemen of Franklin County, Texas, captures a moment when local identity and global conflict converged. Now, as it resurfaces in our new military exhibit, the edition invites modern audiences to engage with history in a deeply personal way. Some years ago, someone laminated what appears to be **the only known original copy of the thirty-two-page “69th Anniversary & Service Men’s Edition” of the Mount Vernon Optic-Herald, from Friday, October 15, 1943.** Those pages are kept in our archives to preserve the integrity of the document. But before it was laminated, the pages had been copied. From the copy, we have put together individually framed pages for audiences to view and study.

At its core, the publication reflects how small-town journalism functioned during World War II. Newspapers like the *Optic-Herald* were not merely reporting on distant battlefields; they were documenting the lives of neighbors, men and women who answered the call and stepped into uniform. The edition features photographs, service details, and personal notes—elements that transform abstract war narratives into tangible human stories of its time. In doing so, it bridges the gap between the global scale of World War II and the intimate scale of a rural Texas county.



The significance of a document like this lies in its dual role as both historical record and emotional artifact. For historians, it offers a snapshot of wartime demographics, local enlistment patterns, and community sentiment. For families, it can serve as a genealogical treasure, preserving names and faces that might otherwise fade from collective memory. More broadly, it demonstrates how communities rallied, commemorated sacrifice, and maintained morale during one of the most turbulent periods of the 20th century.

From a journalistic perspective, the special edition is a masterclass in audience engagement—especially for its time. Those interested in journalism will find value in examining how reporting styles and priorities have evolved over time.

Human interest focus: By centering on individual servicemen, the paper personalizes the war, making it relatable and immediate.

Visual storytelling: Even the advertisements are a tribute to the wartime efforts of the people and places of Franklin County.

Community relevance: Every page holds significance for its local readers, reinforcing a shared sense of identity and purpose.

Commemorative tone: The edition serves as both reportage and tribute, blending factual documentation with emotional resonance. These same elements are what make the artifact so powerful in a modern exhibit setting. Visitors to the Franklin County Historical Association’s military exhibit won’t just be reading history—they’ll be encountering it.

We hope students will gain a better understanding of wartime life from interacting with these artifacts; and history enthusiasts will appreciate the authenticity of a primary source. It really is a rare find. In fact, when we researched our microfilm for this edition, as well as the CD copies, this particular issue was not found. I called the research department for the “Portal To Texas History” project at University of North Texas, to see if they had a copy in their collection. They did not. We truly are holding a gem. And we want to share it.

Our military exhibit promises to draw a diverse audience. There are so many reasons to attend our grand opening on May 25th. Memorial Day is sure to be a busy day for veterans and their families; and we want to make this community space available as a place of honor and reflection. Educators can use it as a teaching tool to illustrate how national events ripple through local communities. Franklin County Historical Association is not just preserving the past; it is inviting the present to rediscover it. Come see us at the grand opening or anytime. We are here for you.



PRESENTS

5/25/26 

FRANKLIN COUNTY SERVES:

CELEBRATING FRANKLIN COUNTY'S SERVICE TO AMERICA

grand opening reception

FIRE STATION MUSEUM, 107 SCOTT ST., MT. VERNON, TX

MONDAY, MAY 25TH

**2:00 PM -
5:00 PM**

**RIBBON CUTTING,
OPEN HOUSE & RECEPTION
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING**



Featuring WW2, Korea, and Vietnam era uniforms and memorabilia of Franklin County residents who answered the call to arms! Also showing is the 32-page 69th Anniversary and Service Men's Edition of the Mount Vernon Optic-Herald from October 15, 1943.

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THAT HONOR THE BRAVERY OF OUR
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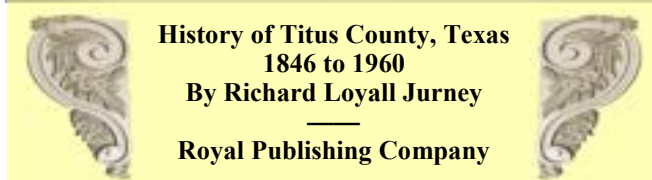
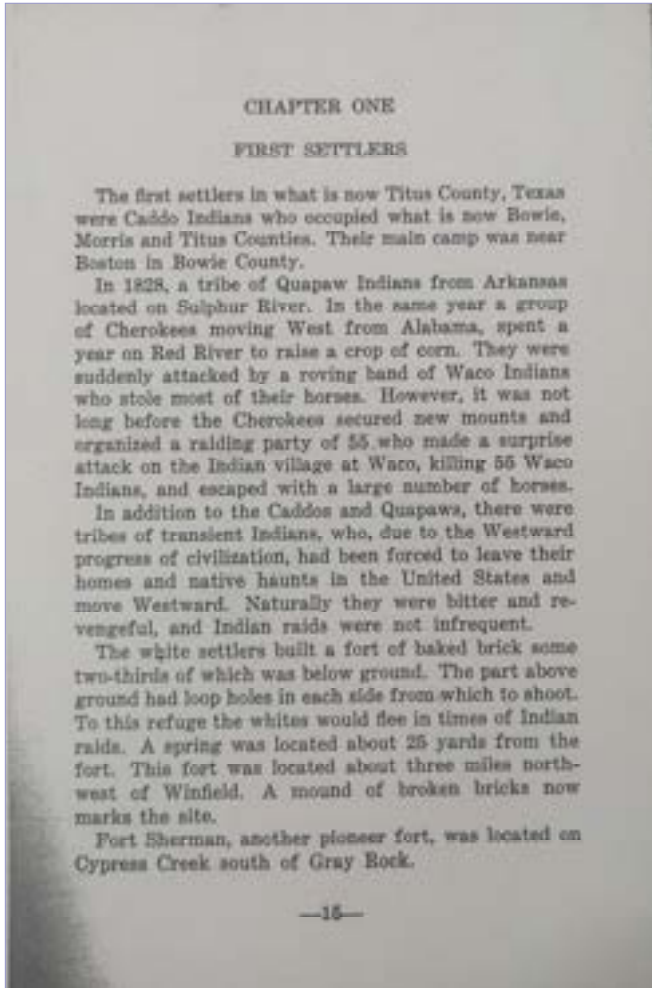
RETHINKING THE RIPLEY MASSACRE

B.F. Hicks

Skipper Steely of Paris has written the most compelling and complete history of the first wave of Anglo immigration into our region of Texas. It is phenomenal. A little over 800 pages and carefully indexed. You can purchase a digital version through Amazon. The volume was never printed as a bound book.

The original manuscript is in the University Library at Texas A&M Commerce (now designated as A&M East Texas – at least for the moment; the former East Texas State University). I had worked with Skipper, providing some materials, driving him about to locations, and contributing financially toward costs for publication. Skipper gave me a copy of the manuscript, and I placed it in our association’s reference library. It’s fragile and we won’t release it from the building, but it is worth checking out if you want to stop by the Fire Station Museum.

Between reading Skipper’s history ([47 Years](#)) – and reading his account of the Ripley Massacre of April 10, 1841; and reviewing land titles and ownership for the land lying along the boundary between Titus and Franklin Counties, I have reconsidered my earlier analysis of the fateful actions in the days following the massacre.



We have a lot of written records regarding the massacre. Three Titus County historians wrote detailed accounts (some more graphic and gruesome than others). The massacre also gets coverage in more general Texas histories. Skipper gives a good account. Most people accept the fact that two young daughters survived; were washing clothes in the creek, hidden by cane, witnessed the massacre, and fled south of the Ripley home to the Charles Black home – up on a bluff still owned by descendants of the Black family. The problem for me is what happened next.

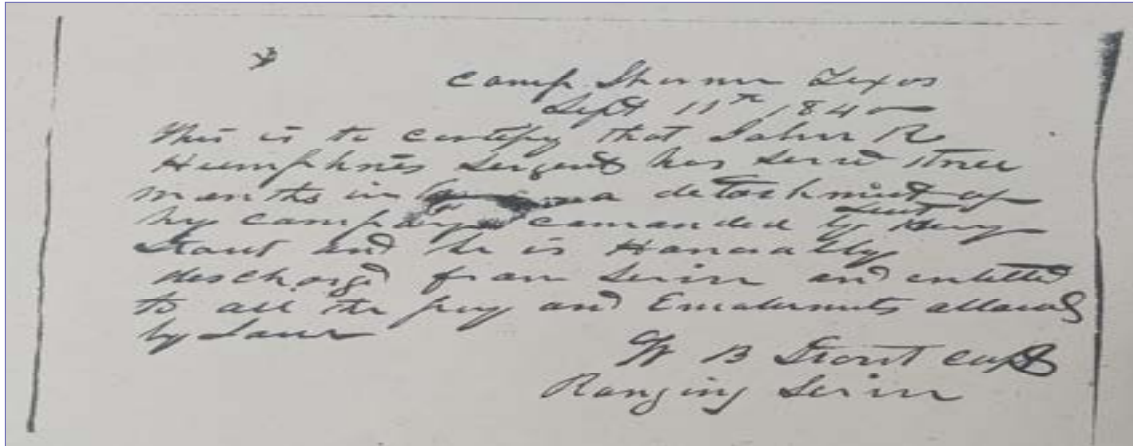
Titus County historians pretty much universally wanted to claim the massacre site lay in Titus County. However, Linda Stansell of Mt. Pleasant was searching miscellaneous receipts of the Republic of Texas files at the Barker Center in Austin, and she found the original files in which Ambrose Ripley filed his “petition for losses suffered in the defense of the frontier” which included affidavits of citizens who joined in raids of retributions following the massacre. All well and good. That discovery provided documentary evidence needed to support the application for an official state historical marker which is now situated about 3 miles east of Mt. Vernon on the north side of US Highway 67.

But here’s the rub. Everyone said that the locals (think angry neighbors) gathered at the English property; it’s actually assumed and written up in many accounts as Fort English over near Bonham (Bailey English did have a fort in that vicinity). But our own Cecil Burnett Pearce writes in 1923 that the settlers, including the Ripleys, had been living in a fort erected on a bluff on the northwest corner of the intersection of the Choctaw Trail and the Cherokee Trace. And Pearce says that the Ripley family had only recently (“before the massacre”) removed from the fort to their cabin south of the fort. This

fort does get a good bit of attention, and early histories support the “English Fort” as more important than Fort Sherman. And we have the affidavits regarding the arrival of the Humphries family in July 1818 and a tremendous volume of land title work regarding the numerous settlers residing and claiming land in the area.

But the historians say that most of the resistance was organized at Fort English (English) over near Bonham. It just didn’t make sense. I’ve always puzzled over the ‘how’ and ‘why’ as to settlers going all the way to what is now Fannin County.

Affidavit from Sept. 11, 1840



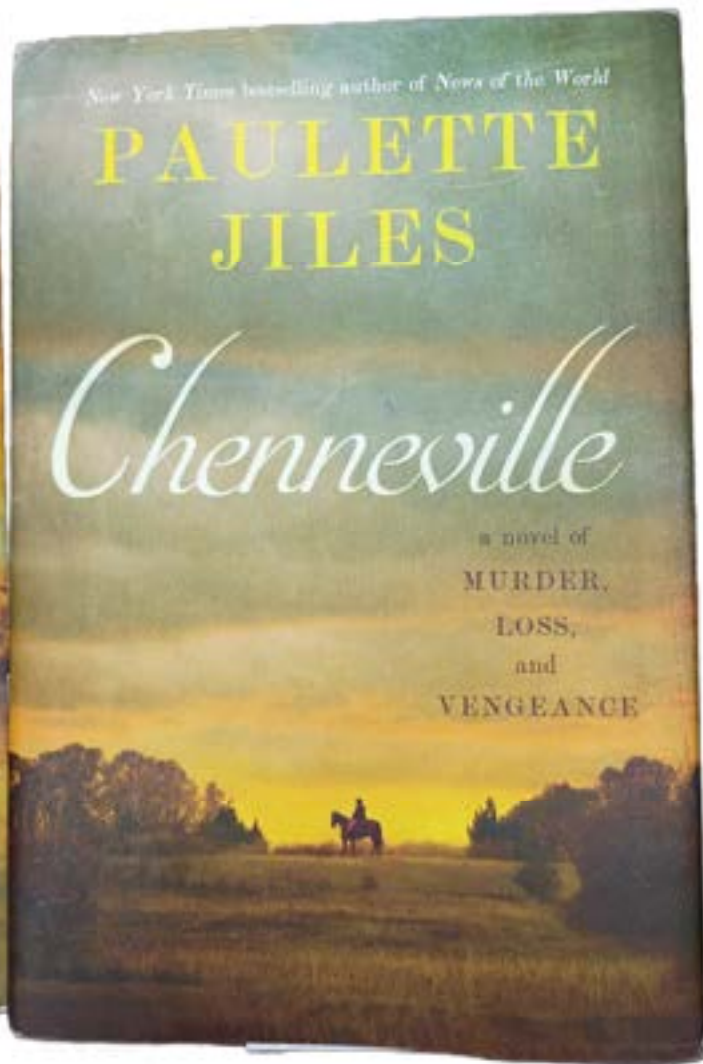
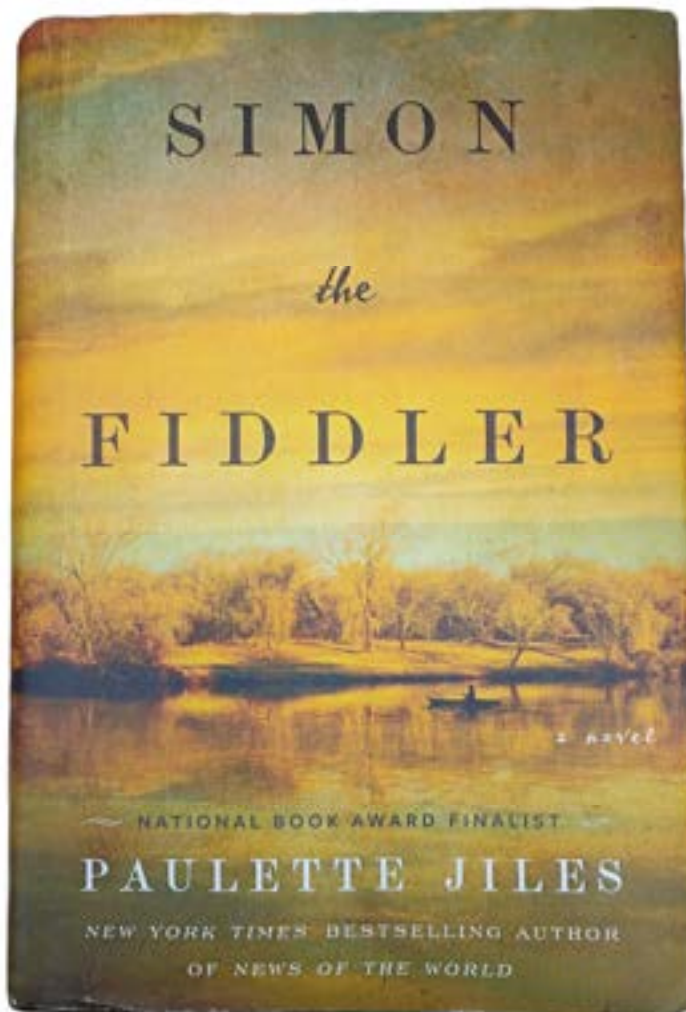
I'm checking my family's own land titles and settlement records. The older members of my mother's family born in the decades preceding and following the year 1900 always spoke of their common ancestor (a William Virgil Hughes and wife Eleanor Dykes Cocke Hughes along with children including son-in-law Charles S. Stewart) settling at the intersection of the Cherokee Trace and the Choctaw Trail. Uncle Morris takes me by the land at the northeast corner of the junction and points out the site of the home; he later takes me to the homeplace of another ancestor, Enos Harper, and he takes me to the high ridge where the fort was located. And Aunt Mae (a generation older than Morris had pointed out the location of the Ripley Massacre, but that was just a verbal report until one other early citizen (Opal Blue Dawson) takes me to the same location, and then it proves accurate with the Stansell discovery.

Uncle Morris (my mom's older brother) has title to land measured along the Cherokee Trace; no new survey was done; he deeded it to his oldest child, and with the death of that child - my first cousin Ann Hughes Stevens - recently; the deed measurements in *varas* are used to prepare a new deed to her daughter Susan Rader. A land description not changed for well over a century and still calling for measurements along the Trace. BUT what's important: A portion of the land (think fort location) is in the Ann English Survey. And the land was granted to Ann English - based on settlement about the year 1840.

So we have Pearce in 1923 telling us about the massacre and the location. And then I'm studying the maps as I work toward another state historical marker, and I see English. Ann English. And I realize: those pioneers didn't have to go to the Bailey English fort near Bonham; they had the English Fort a half-mile northwest of the Ripley homeplace. In 1946 Richard Loyal Journey publishes a history of Titus County, and he references the fort at the Baldwin's Bluff location. But no one was giving me the obvious: The English Fort; the fort on the Ann English land - not a half-mile away from our massacre site. Who was Baldwin? Some other student must search further—or in an upcoming report I'll have findings. In any event: **we can rethink the events following the massacre.** The Anglos marched north under the leadership of Charles S. Stewart and slaughtered Indians; John B. Denton leads his fellow settlers west as far as Denton and is killed fighting Indians he has encountered. The legendary Stouts fight Indians before the summer is out at trading grounds where present-day Arlington prospers. Our marker at the massacre site was based in great part on the significance of that massacre. The massacre led to armed and angry action by Anglos; they drove the Indians out of the eastern third of Texas. A shameful act we can admit, but it is our history and it is what happened. And, as to staging that rapid response to the massacre; the immediate organization of the community and men marching north to the Sulphur; no, they did not march over to Bonham; they gathered in the neighborhood at the English Fort and they marched north. For me, at least, I'll call that a mystery solved. We are fortunate to have a heritage and legacy of continuing use of beautiful land: drive out to the massacre site and then wind on into Titus County and look down into the creek bottom where those girls hid while their family was killed - now almost 2 centuries ago.

HISTORICAL FICTION-Recommended Work
B.F. Hicks

There is too much good historical fiction. Our own secretary of the association Gail Reed is turning out great work. My brother John has a better memory than mine. And then I get recommendations from friends. A few years back, Carolyn Teague told me that I should read *NEWS OF THE WORLD* by Paulette Giles. I did, and enjoyed it thoroughly. Paulette Giles has died within the past year. I wish I could have gotten around to writing the letter of appreciation while she lived. She has the protagonist roaming across Texas. She tracks Comanches, delves into history in Mason, Texas, but comes through Paris and northeast Texas. A couple of years pass and I meet new volunteers Jim and Jane Funke. Jim's family roots are in St. Louis, Missouri and he recommends *CHENNEVILLE* by Paulette Giles. No wonder: the book is great history. But what I particularly enjoy in reading the work is her detailed descriptions of lifestyles of the era. In this case, Civil War and decade following. So, I mention to my friend Margaret Culbertson (Jefferson, Texas, now Houston) and she knows the works and says that *SIMON THE FIDDLER* is undeniably the best. She sends the book. It opens with an incident in Marshall, Texas in 1864; the young Simon is playing his fiddle for a party in August and the family are hauling blocks of ice out of a pit lined with hay where it has been stored since winter. I've heard of such: she explains the method for such preservation. It's just great historical fiction. In *SIMON* our fiddler goes from Marshall to the Rio Grande; along the Texas coast and inland to Houston and San Antonio; In *CHENNEVILLE* – from St. Louis and New Orleans through Fort Towson, Mt. Pleasant, Marshall. A lot of explanations of the means and modes of travel. And tales of hardship; dreadfully accurate I suspect. I'm constantly surprised at the ability of people to travel great distances; I think it is more common than we realize. You'll see that Joseph Reed was serving with the Republic of Texas Rangers in 1840 at Fort Sherman (today at Bob Sandlin State Park), but the report of his service was filed in Houston. Thanks to friends for recommendations and the recommendations are passed wholeheartedly to you. If children do not see us reading, they do not comprehend the pleasure to be derived. Set the example. Check out Paulette Giles.



SHAKESPEARE PROGRAM—Haints & Haunts, continued

B.F. Hicks



In our January 2026 newsletter, we reported on a program given for the members of the Shakespeare Club covering haints and haunts in and about Mt. Vernon.

I've had a couple of months to reflect on instances and characters I overlooked. I failed to tell of some murders, such as that argument which ended with a fatal stabbing with a butcher knife in the west end of what is now Tag's Restaurant, or of other events which may be of interest to anyone with a spiritual bent. I don't guarantee success for any ghost hunters but this article should present the opportunity to seek some lingering spirits.

Last issue we reported on the death of the young girl after her doctor misdiagnosed her stomach ache and left her with a ruptured appendix.

Journey mentally back to the town square. Stand out in that square and look to the south side of the street. Stop midway. Annis Prather will shoot 23-year-old Cullen Stringer here on February 24, 1904. Prather then turns the gun on himself. Annis Prather was the uncle of Hazel White Meredith. The Prathers are all related to the Gregg family, some of our earliest settlers. A Gregg dog-trot house built about 1840 still stands just east of town in a wooden lot.

We have the newspaper account (reprinted below). The account is graphic. The Stringer family version always involved rivalry between Annis and Cullen over Tula Broach. Cullen survived the fight; married Tula August 28, 1904. Their home still stands on Holbrook Street and they lie together in the Mt. Vernon City Cemetery. Annis is buried, not far away, in the same cemetery. Perhaps after a century these souls are at peace.



Tula Broach Stringer (left)
Charlotte Malone Stringer (right)

Cullen Stringer

The quietude of our little city was suddenly broken on yesterday evening about dusk by the enactment of a tragedy as strange as it is sad and horrible. An eye witness gives the following story of the tragedy: Annis Prather and Cullen Stringer were standing just off the edge of the sidewalk about midway between Langston & Fuquay's and the Crescent Drug Store, quarreling, each accusing the other of having told falsehoods concerning him. They refused to listen to the entreaties of friends and rushed together in the street. Each had previously declared he bore no arms. During the scuffle two pistol shots were heard in quick succession and Cullen Stringer fell on his face apparently dead with one bullet in the back of his neck. Annis stepped away with a pistol in his hand and was approached by County Clerk T.B. Banister, who said to Annis, "If you boys had done as I said there wouldn't have been any trouble." He then reached to get Annis' pistol, but before he knew it Annis made a quick movement backward and threw up his hands, the pistol was discharged and Annis fell to the ground with a large hole in the back part of his head. Only one pistol was found afterwards, it being a large Colt 41 and three loads were missing from it. Annis was mortally wounded and never uttered a word after he fell. His body was first taken to Rutherford's Drug Store and later to the home of A.J. Fuquay. The interment was at the City Cemetery. Annis was the son of T.L. Prather, one of the most influential citizens of our county. For the past few years he has been clerking for Langston & Fuquay and has been a favorite society leader. He was very handsome and had a host of friends and relatives who are now bowed down with grief. Cullen Stringer was carried into the Crescent Drug Store where his wound was examined and dressed. The ball entered his neck on the right side just back of and below the ear and passed out on the left side just behind the ear, just grazing the spinal column enough to partially paralyze his arms. He was taken to the home of his father J.W. Stringer and we are glad to say doing very nicely.—*Obituary of Annis Prather, February 24, 1904—Mt. Vernon Optic*



First National Bank

Look at the public library; until recent years the home of First National Bank of Mt. Vernon. The building dates from – say 1910 – and it is used as the bank up through the 1960s. It is mid-depression era America – ca. 1933. The janitor uses the back door (it’s still there) and the door is inset into sort of an overhang (it’s still there) and a robber lies in wait and the janitor steps out and is murdered. Smith Walker, local, will go to prison for life upon conviction for murder. Not sure if Walker was eventually released on parole or pardon; may have died in Huntsville.

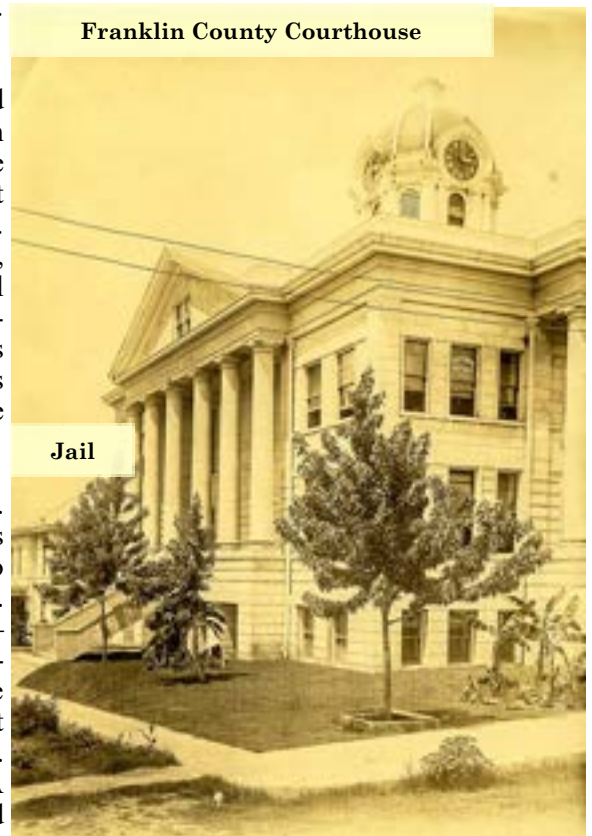
Many of the old families don’t like to tell their stories. Forty years ago, I’m a young guy attending a meeting of the historical association and Carl Newsom gives an hour-long talk on murders and mayhem. Carl told of that murder. He said that Smith Walker was the meanest man who ever lived in Franklin County. Never heard the story since. People didn’t talk. In my own family: we’ve read so many reports of the outliers – the men who deserted the southern cause midway through the War (think back to Inman in the historical novel COLD MOUNTAIN which is based in historical fact)...Well, maybe they weren’t true deserters but were furloughed and just stayed home. My own ancestor, an Aikin, came back with an injury in mid-1863; hid out in “a cave east of town” and never returned to the front. The War was so unpopular here in Northeastern Texas, doesn’t seem like anyone held the quasi-desertion against him although

the story was only told among my own kin. Back to that entry on the side of the bank, let this article serve as food and fodder to lead someone to that spot in the middle of a dark night to see if any spirit still hangs about.

Drive down West Main; turn north onto English and then turn west onto Lake Street, you’ll see a modern home facing Lake which is consistent in style with the neighborhood. The next home (south side of Lake Street) was the home of Dr. Sidney Galt (son of Wilbur Jabez Galt) and his wife, Elizabeth Ivey Galt. Their first-born son Wilbur drowned as a young boy and his mother grieved for the rest of her life. You’ll see the pond to the east of the house. Aunt Lizzie kept ducks; raised and pampered them from the 1950s until her death. The tradition continues and you’ll see ducks today.

Look at the old jail standing north of the courthouse. This is the third jail built in Mt. Vernon. In the second floor are cage-like cells which were moved from the second jail in the center of the town square into the present building in 1912 to save expenses. The empty lot just north of the 1912 Franklin County Jail was the home of Col. Henry Hamilton Weaver. Col. Weaver, a veteran of the Civil War, kept a Confederate flag flying in front of his establishment during all the years he was in the mercantile business. He started the first Sunday school in Mt. Vernon in 1868. He was larger than life; rode his horse into the railroad depot office each Sunday morning to set his clock with railroad time before convening the Sunday school. He died May 31, 1930. And he, too, is buried in the city cemetery.

Now, let’s face the courthouse. Stand on the square and look north. Imagine that corner. A blacksmith shop - Hinnant and Jim Teague’s shop. Their descendants Hiram and Hiram’s son Charles transition to the automobile industry. In 1912, the corner has the blacksmith shop. In the sort of alley east of the present courthouse is a log building – back in 1879. The building still stands...just hauled off for incorporation into a barn. Back to 1879. It is sort of a lock up; would have been brutal in Texas summers. Maybe 16 by 12. The county’s first jail – probably actually used before county creation – maybe 1850. Outside that small building, young Robert Morgan is on duty. A gang of thugs rides into town to free a friend; they shoot Morgan and free the inmates. April 5, 1879. He’s 23 years old and he’s buried up near the Stringers and Prathers. We have such a beautiful district courtroom in our courthouse. Col. Dan Bolin sets out a great scene for a jail break about 1890. The courthouse was in the center of the square. The district judge realized



Franklin County Courthouse

Jail

Haints & Haunts (continued)

what was happening (the jail stood in the square also); grabbed his rifle from beneath the bench and joined the lawmen in pursuit, going into White Oak Bottom. Our public square: Read the A.W. Sparks history of the war from his Franklin County perspective. In this newsletter, you get the account of Charles S. Stewart organizing troops in September 1861 on our square. They march north. They pledged to “the Mt. Vernon ladies” that they would soon be home. For many of them (including Stewart) that was not to prove true. Surely some souls linger about the square.

While you are in the vicinity of the town square, do remember the funeral homes – casket sales, shrouds, services, etc. – provided by the Guy P. Hill Store staff (now used by Chop House) and Edwards and Harvey (now Tag’s). And the bell that tolled the funeral processions and was rung as the families traveled up that hill to the cemetery east of town – that bell stands in front of the fire station museum still.

Take a moment and reflect on spirits that probably still haunt this space. This south side of the town square originally is occupied by stores operating out of log cabin type structures. A very large frame hotel was erected in 1861 and a two-story brick building is erected by 1900 – for The First National Bank of Mt. Vernon. The Merchants and Planters Bank Building still stands to the west across Kaufman Street. The 1900 building burns and is repaired in 1912; remodeled in the 1950s and again about 1980 with the present exterior. The building was gifted to the county for a public library.



Palmer Hotel, East Main, Mt. Vernon, ca. 1910

Let's review our site: The western back side of the M&P Bank housed a café in the 1930s. James D. Holland cut up a Goodson man with a butcher knife when a scuffle broke out in the café about 1938. In that same time frame, Smith Walker was convicted of the murder of the bank's janitor. He waylaid the man when he exited the back entry into the bank (now library) on the west wall of the building facing Kaufman Street. And in front of the present library, we have the 1904 quarrel between Annis Prather and Cullen Stringer over Tula Broach. Prather pulled a gun and shot Stringer just under his left jaw. As Stringer lay bleeding in the street, a bystander told Prather “you've just killed yourself a man.” With this news, Prather turned the gun on himself, taking his own life. Stringer survived his injury, married the girl and lived a long life with an ugly scar.

Leave the square; travel south on Kaufman to the 1894 Cotton Belt Depot. In 1946, the depot faced the tracks. It's 1946, and Miss Lutie Brooks has started across the tracks. In defense of the railway, I think I've understood that the lady was elderly and a bit deaf. The newspaper accounts report that she was struck by the east bound passenger train. Her tombstone in the city cemetery is poignant: her name and vital statistics but also a palette and brushes verifying her role as the town's art teacher of long-standing. Her mother-in-law (Mary Brooks) started the annual summer art institute and inspired appreciation for culture here starting in 1869. In our museum we have many works by the mother and her daughter-in-law and their pupils.

Travel over to Holbrook Street. At the corner of Majors and Holbrook, you see the home built by Thomas A. Holder. Old deeds for this property reference the creek (often called town branch) which runs in a northerly-southerly direction to the north of the house. In deeds from the 1880s there is reference to the grist mill north of the house and on the creek. You'd find metal there today; I won't speak to laboring souls.

We do have to remember Mrs. Moss. “Miss Linnie” as referenced by my family. She died in 1969 – past 80 years old – and she had survived her husband Richard who died in 1946. Miz Moss carried bricks. That is: if she saw a brick, she picked it up and carried it to her home which stood north of the courthouse and jail. She said she was going to build a brick house someday. At her death, her brick house was yet to have been started, but the back yard was stacked with miscellaneous bricks from every construction site in the town.

My grandfather’s sister, Mae Hughes Milam, sold tombstones. Represented the Bergin Monument Yard of Sulphur Springs. The Moss tombstone in the city cemetery is a large, tall and imposing granite marker. Good looking. But it was not of the modern style of the 1940s when the widow Moss went looking for the tombstone after her husband’s death. Mrs. Moss purchased a used tombstone. Aunt Mae appreciated the quality. She thought it so typical of Mrs. Moss who was noted for frugality. The marker surface was sanded off and the new names were engraved. Aunt Mae may have particularly appreciated the Moss family in any event. Her first husband Ira Masters was superintendent of Mt. Vernon schools in the late 1920s and Mr. Moss followed in that role after Uncle Ira’s premature death of pneumonia in 1931. Yes, Uncle Ira is in the city cemetery also. In my mind, the aged lady still walks our streets carrying a couple of bricks.

In writing this addendum to the earlier haints review, I’ve reflected on the role of women in the town. I mention Miz Moss and Aunt Mae and I remember the women who’ve been prominent in the leadership of the town; women who survived their husbands by decades. I should mention Miss Eva Rountree. Eva Goswick married Robert Rountree. Rountree purchased two newspapers, the Franklin Herald and the Mt. Vernon Optic. In 1909 he combined the two papers into the Mt. Vernon Optic-Herald. The newspaper ceased publication in 2023 and today our only local news is through social media and digital services. But the sad report for Robert Rountree. He died within months of consolidation of the newspaper in the fall of 1909; his widow “Miss Eva” survived another sixty-six years and was an institution in the town. Miss Eva’s brother, S.D. Goswick, was mayor of the town when the vote was taken for formal incorporation of the town and construction of a public waterworks in 1910. Miss Eva never missed church and was so venerated that even a small child (me) held her in awe as she sat erect during services. Her home – a beautiful Victorian with fish-scale siding – still stands on Keith Street and there is a magnolia in the front yard. Catch that tree in full bloom and the fragrance in the air may truly be credited to Miss Eva’s presence.

I’ve fretted over my failure to include the foregoing comments to the Shakespeare Club members but I did go on for an hour in talking to them and I think this additional information might have resulted in some members asking for my departure. I hope they can be satisfied with this written report and perhaps inspired to visit some of these sites I’ve described.



EARLY DAY LAWYERS IN CLARKSVILLE, TEXAS

E.W. Bowers, *Submitted by Anne Evetts*

Editor's Note: *Clarksville Lawyers and the Murder of Robert Potter. What we have to remember is context: Robert Potter is a member of the Texas Bar. BUT he is living on Caddo Lake at Jefferson, and his wife Harriett is the protagonist of LOVE IS A WILD ASSAULT. But in 1836 Texas has only 16 counties, and Red River County with Clarksville as the county seat covers an administrative jurisdiction stretching to Jefferson. And here is the musing written by the great historian, E.W. Bowers. Bowers is the author of RED RIVER DUST and served, among other positions, as District Clerk of Red River County where he was in an ideal position to read and report on early history of our region as documented in court filings. He is grandfather of Anne Evetts – kin through maternal lines to me (B.F. Hicks) and paternal lines to Mary Lou Russell Mowery; we are in East Texas; dig a bit and the web connects.*

When Texas Independence was declared in 1836 it was some years before many counties had courts. Clarksville had the first Courthouse in N.E. Texas and there was not another one within 250 miles from about 1837 to 1841. Clarksville was the biggest town in the region—in fact the only town...and was the County seat for what now comprises 18 counties. There was no Dallas, or Fort Worth, Texarkana, or Sherman. In fact, you could go west from Clarksville to the Pacific Coast and not come within one hundred miles of a town except possibly Santa Fe, then in Texas but now in New Mexico.

The Clarksville Bar was then the most distinguished in Texas with the leading lights being Ebenezer Allen, Amos Morrill, John E. Denton, Edward H. Tarrant, William R. Scurry and Richardson Scurry, John M. Hanford, John T. Mills, William S. Todd, Richard Ellis, William C. Young, Robert Potter and others. Several counties were named after these famous men of Texas history.

Probably the most sensational murder in Texas history was the murder of Robert Potter of the Clarksville Bar by Captain W.P. Rose (the so-called “Lion of the Lakes”). That is by Rose and his gang—the war between the Regulators and the Moderators. Another phase of this same conflict resulted in the murder of District Judge John M. Hanford.

It was a violent country as three members of the Clarksville Bar were murdered within two years. It is not now known how many men were hanged on the notorious “Page’s Tree” here in the Clarksville Cemetery.

In many ways the career of Amos Morrill is the most interesting as he lived in Clarksville from 1838 to 1857, when he moved to Austin. Morrill was the most persecuted man ever to live in this region. He came to Clarksville a few years after his graduation from Bowdoin College in Maine—on account of his ruthless manner in trying suits especially toward opposing attorneys, he became very unpopular. Also, since he was born in Massachusetts, he was an abolitionist and that made him increasingly unpopular as the Civil War came on. My grandfather knew him quite well and was his friend. Grandfather said, “One cause of Morrill’s trouble was that he had no sense of humor and took everything too seriously, including himself.”

My book¹ contains two incidents where his enemies had him on the ropes and all but out.

He moved to Austin in 1857 after obtaining a judgement against Colonel Charles DeMorse, Editor of the Clarksville Standard, for libel in a lawsuit in which numbers of prominent people took part as attorneys and witnesses.

In 1861 due to his northern sympathies, he fled to Mexico and went back to Massachusetts. But as soon as New Orleans was captured, he came there and as soon as the war was over, he came back to Austin. He had become a friend of General Phil Sheridan who was a military Governor of the Southwest. Sheridan removed Governor Throckmorton and appointed E.M. Pease Governor and Pease appointed Morrill as Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court. In 1872 General Grant appointed Morrill as Federal Judge of the Eastern District of Texas, a place he held until his death in the middle eighties. While Federal Judge, he sustained the Civil Rights Law and was overruled by the Supreme Court. His decision in that matter has been finally sustained by the present court. He died as perhaps the wealthiest lawyer in Texas.



Eugene W. Bowers

This is just one man among the interesting characters. Ebenezer Allen, Judge Mills and Judge Todd and several others have equally interesting careers, those not so violent as Morrill.

¹The author’s book would appear to be *Red River Dust*.

REFLECTIONS—*Reprinted from a fall 2025 Facebook Post*

David Aikin

The cooler weather has me thinking about Halloween. Not the modern version where a kid can be any character he or she wants simply by browsing Amazon and tapping a few keys. I'm talking about the Halloweens of my childhood.

The costumes of my day were usually bought last minute after procrastination or forgetting one until the day before. They came from Gibson's, TG&Y, Duke and Ayers, or whichever discount store you happened to live near. For the princely sum of \$3.95, you could be a princess, a witch, a ghost, a skeleton, or if you were extra lucky, a cowboy. The suits were glorified trash sacks in one size fits all. If you were what was euphemistically referred to as "husky"; chances are your seams would have duct tape tailoring by night's end. No flame retardant stuff for us, thank you. We liked ours in extra flammable.

The masks were another subject altogether. Apparently the designers neither had children nor had ever seen one. I judge that by the fact that the masks all had dime sized eye holes that were at least two inches too close together. This caused the wearer to choose an eye to see with. The nostrils were pencil diameter slits which allowed roughly half enough air required to breathe. Even a short walk to a house meant you sounded like Darth Vader by the time someone opened the door. Speaking...actually not speaking of, they had no mouth opening, so you sounded like a broken McDonald's speaker when you begged for candy.

We lived so far out that they had to pipe in sunlight, so there was no such thing as walking the neighborhood. Typically, five or six of us would pile in the back of a pickup, or a land yacht car, and be chauffeured around by two moms that drew short straws. The dads always seemed to find work of some kind that had to be done that very night. Now in those days, people didn't decorate for Halloween. At least the ones north of White Oak didn't. You were lucky if there was a porch light. In addition, most people kept outside dogs that weren't crazy about visitors under the best of circumstances. They sure weren't welcoming to a gang of small mumbling creatures staggering blindly across the yard.

Keep in mind, this was an era before the horror stories of needles and razor blades in candy. A good portion of the treats were handmade. Popcorn balls, caramel apples, cookies, and fudge bars were all gladly accepted. We once waited en masse at an elderly widow's kitchen table while she made Rice Krispy Treats, because she had run out of store-bought candy.

I could go on about the time we backed off a driveway culvert and got stuck. Or about the time my aunt accidentally rolled my cousin's head up in the car window, but those are minor inconveniences. What stands out is the pure, unbridled joy of being a kid. Things like riding in the bed of a truck down a dark country road, pale moon rising overhead. Of huddling together under a quilt as the crisp fall air chilled us. I could tell you about the excitement as imaginary monsters lurked in the shadows along tree-lined roads, just waiting to snatch one of us from the truck bed.

Last year my grandson went as Wolverine. His costume was so accurate that he could have been Hugh Jackman's 1/3rd scale stand-in. On one street in town, he got enough candy to give a dental school nightmares. Easy pickings. He'll never know the joy of stumbling across a dark yard as a dog gnaws on your leg. Of finally getting to the door, knocking, and screaming "MICKER MEET!" through a mask with no mouth hole. Or of having a mom, impatient for the night to end, miscount her goblins and leave you to fend for yourself.

RESEARCH LIBRARY CATALOGUE UPDATE

We recently reviewed the inventory in our research library, which took a better part of twenty hours and consisted of going shelf by shelf comparing their contents to our comprehensive digital guide. The list had not been updated since the untimely death of our last librarian Robert Long during the Covid epidemic. A new manuscript—*Geology and Underground Waters of Northeastern Texas, U.S. Geological Survey, Water-Supply Paper 276, 1911*—was added to our collection, thanks to Mary Snyder McLennan. This manuscript features a geologic map of northeast Texas and reports on ground characteristics across several counties including Lamar, Delta, Red River, Bowie, Hopkins, Franklin, and Cass. Our library is available during normal museum hours, and we have tables, chairs and refreshments if you would like to visit and read or research. The items in our library are for reference only and are not able to be borrowed. A list of library contents is available on our webpage at www.fchatx.com/library.



THUMBING A RIDE

Reprinted from Paul M. Rowland's collection of essays: "Some Reflections, Some Thoughts, and Some Stories."

Editor's Note: Paul M. Rowland had a rural upbringing in Missouri and later worked in executive business positions across the American Mid-west. He wrote the essays for his family over a five-year span in the 1980s. The essays are similar in style to those of Mt. Vernon native son, Ray Loyd Johnson. Johnson writes of coming of age in the post-war decade from 1946 through his high school graduation from Mt. Vernon High School in 1956. Rowland writes of coming of age in the decade encompassing the Great Depression. The style and information are valuable as preserving our history and heritage through significant periods of the past.



Paul M. Rowland

Rowland is the father of Jane Funke. Jim Rowland died three years ago and his widow now lives in Dallas. Jane's husband, Jim Funke, is the state project director for Smackover Lithium; he and Jane promptly joined our association and have since volunteered as docents and gave us the collection of essays by Jane's father. This particular story speaks of the very common practice for travel in America in the "post war" years – which until recent times was understood as the decade after the conclusion of World War II. Although this story is set in the American mid-West, if you read the diaries and letters of local boys who have served, they reference "hitching" a ride in regular reports. Oftentimes coming home from deployment; enroute to Dallas; not waiting for a train and hitching their way on home. Bill Holmes told of his return home. The war had ended suddenly and he was unexpectedly in Dallas. He hitched a ride east as far as Franklin County. He got a ride with someone as far as Lake Chapel and started walking. He walked the three miles east along a dusty country lane and started toward the house. His younger brother, Wes, about fourteen, looked up in amazement and shouted: "Billy's home!" The family erupted

with joy at the return of their soldier son.

Bill's older brother, Leonard, was not to return home. His parents had received the War Department notice in January 1944 that their son was MIA in Italy. Leonard Holmes was a flight officer; received his wings in September 1942, and commenced his service in Europe in April 1943.

Bill went on to Rice University; had a career in the oil and gas field; and then retired home to Franklin County. After the death of his wife Barbara, he married an acquaintance from his youth and they had another ten years before his death in 2015. Bill was a Hughes descendant and Aunt Virgie proudly called him cousin. I was privileged to serve as his best man in that second ceremony out at the Hughes ancestral church at New Hope. Mr. Rowland's account of a ride is a bit more exciting, but Bill's mode of travel served him well. Now for Paul Rowland:

I recently drove 1,500 miles on a trip to Texas and I didn't see a single hitchhiker along the highway. So what's the big deal you ask? Well, it really isn't any big deal, but you must understand that I'm old enough to remember when thumbing a ride was a respectable way of getting around. The fact that there wasn't anyone out there thumbing a ride points up yet another subtle change in our society - a change in the way we treat our fellow human beings.

You see, I believe that our desire to share a ride with a stranger springs from our compassionate nature. Who among us hasn't had a slight feeling of guilt when passing some deserving person on the side of the road? We are supposed to be neighborly. We were taught that when we were kids in Sunday school. We should help out whenever anyone is in need. And, sometimes that help takes the form of providing a ride in our vehicle when there are empty seats available.

During, and right after, World War II literally thousands of military men used to move about the country by hitching rides. Gasoline was in short supply and lots of times trains and busses were over-crowded. And, it wasn't too uncommon to hear someone say he'd reached his destination ahead of the scheduled bus or train service. It was a cheap way to travel and it was usually pretty fast.

But this way of life is gone forever. We let a few crackpots deprive us of our right to act in a way that is a part of our very nature, and in so doing we have compromised our values. This business of hitchhiking is based on mutual trust and when a few Crazies betrayed that trust the whole system collapsed. We not only lost the privilege of sharing a ride with a stranger but we also lost a lot of trust in our fellow men. Now I'm not suggesting that we legalize hitchhiking. There are lots of reasons why we shouldn't do that. Even if we were able to remove all the dangers and perils brought

on by demonic people, it still wouldn't be a good idea. Let me tell you about an experience my brother and I had back in the early fifties. We were standing by a filling station on a highway in Logan, Utah and we were thumbing a ride to Brigham City, 35 miles away. A lot of cars whizzed by before a man in a '39 Plymouth pulled over. We told him where we were headed and he said he would take us there if we would buy him \$1.00 worth of gas. Since we had been standing there quite a while, we took him up on the deal and put in \$1.00 worth of regular. That amounted to about four gallons of gas back in those days.

Now the road from Logan to Brigham City was narrow and winding back in the 50's. To make matters worse, it climbed up over a mountain pass of considerable elevation. Along the way we learned the driver's name was Elmer and he was a farm laborer who had been working in Montana. He was on his way back to Arizona. Well, the ride up the mountain was rather uneventful, but once on top Elmer decided he would conserve some of that free gasoline. He reached down and turned the ignition off and put the gearshift in neutral. Basically, that put us into a free-fall.

Friends, I've ridden roller coasters that weren't as thrilling as that ride down the mountain. Down, down, down we went, drawn ever faster by gravity and miraculously defying Newton's basic laws of physics at every turn. We would have burned up a full set of tires squealing around the hair-pin turns except for the fact that only two tires were on the pavement at any one time. We knew there wasn't any way Elmer could bring that missile to a complete stop. Halfway down the mountain my brother leaned over and asked if I thought we should offer Elmer \$2.00 just to slow down enough to let us to roll out the door.

We rattled around inside that car like croquet balls in a five-gallon cream can. At one point I opened my eyes long enough to see what appeared to be a run-away truck streaking downhill with a load of logs. Whatever it was, we passed it. We were flying! Somehow Elmer got us to Brigham City and what a welcome sight that was since we were convinced the next stop was going to be The Pearly Gates.

But the point I want to make is that there are a lot of well-meaning, but incompetent drivers out there and they could unnecessarily endanger the lives of innocent people if hitchhiking were legalized. So I think it's a good law. It's just that laws have an insidious way of depriving us of other privileges and rights at the same time that they are trying to protect us. Maybe that's the price we pay for that nebulous thing we call Progress.



Paul Rowland (on right) and twin brother Chuck c. 1951 after leaving the Navy and around the time of the hitchhiking story in Utah



Brothers together in uniform. Paul Rowland was a proud Navy veteran with a distinguished career as a Civil Engineer for the USAF at Whiteman Air Force Base.

PRAIRIE CHICKENS

Matt White

Editor's Note: My great-great grandmother Melody Aikin Hughes said the birds were common on the prairie through the 1880s. I always sort of dismissed that report BUT then we found the Early Days material and three or four references to the prairie chickens (large numbers killed in a hail storm in May 1880 and the sound of the males calling in the early mornings and people hunting them). So, we asked Matt White, author of BIRDS OF NORTHEAST TEXAS, about prairie chickens. Matt reports:

The tallgrass prairies in northeastern Texas were once home to a curious “chicken” known to ornithologists as the Greater Prairie Chicken. But they are not chickens. They are grouse. And if there is anything to grouse about (pun intended) it is that these beautiful birds are now extinct in Texas. A race in the northeast (the Heath Hen) has been extinct for over a century, while another on the Texas coast (the Attwater's Prairie Chicken) is hanging on by a thread. Over a million birds in 1900 were reduced to a few dozen by the year 2000. Today less than 100 are alive, and these are on the life support of a captive breeding program.

Greater Prairie Chickens were gone from this region by the early twentieth century; they were shot by the millions even as the seemingly never-ending stream of settlers plowed up the bluestem grasslands eliminating the habitat on which they depended. Even now, fire suppression, fire-ants, industrial development, solar panels, herbicide, pesticide, and the elimination of large tracts in favor of smaller ranchettes continue to take their toll and render it almost impossible for these lush green fields to now host current populations of birds. The tragedy is that even still we continue to believe that we can live without nature. Maybe we can for a time, but at what cost, and for how long?



Great Prairie Chicken

Melody Aikin Hughes will have painted the prairie chicken about around the age of forty under the tutelage of Lucia Flagg Brooks, the town's painter. Later generations doubted her story, repeated apparently often in old age, that the birds were common when she was a young woman. Historical records support her report. Friends in life and comrades in death, lying in the older sections of the city cemetery in Mount Vernon, Texas.

Mary Melody Aikin Hughes, (1865-1953)

Lucia Flagg Brooks, teacher (1868-1946)



Right: Christine Hicks with her grandmother Melody Aikin Hughes in 1949. The reception was at the Virgil Hughes home on East Main Street .

ART IN MOUNT VERNON, TEXAS

Mount Vernon artists sponsored Summer Art Institutes commencing in 1869 through 1940. The town formed male and female academies in 1849.; and converted to a coed program in the hard times of the Civil War (1861-1865).

Molly Petty Stringer was a student in the 1869 institute. Her daughter-in-law, Lottie Malone Stringer, painted the subject which is shown in the upper right area of the 1886 photograph (below). And our museum has oil paintings from about 1905 painted by Tula Broach Stringer, another of Molly's daughters-in-law.

The late Robert Sterling Long solicited donations of artwork by early Franklin County families and we have a wealth of historical paintings on exhibit and in our archives. The photograph of the 1886 studio group was donated by the

family of Annie Ward Nance of Mt. Vernon. Mrs. Nance and her daughters studied in Mt. Vernon under the Brooks family from about 1885 through 1925. The studio was on the town square; this may have been an upstairs corner room in the two-story Rutherford Drug Building which stood at the corner of Houston and Main Streets.



**Left: Summer Art Institute
Mt. Vernon, Texas
Miss Annie Ellis Williams of Knoxville, Tennessee, instructor.**

**Photo restored by Cassandra Black
of Photographique,
Dallas, Texas**

**Bottom:
Art pupils of Mrs. M.T. Brooks,
Mt. Vernon, Texas, ca. 1905**

Presently, the Gallery on Main (Franklin County Arts Alliance) in Mt. Vernon offers oil painting classes for the aspiring artist, as well as a gallery comprising works using various mediums by local contributors. To inquire, call 903-537-9009.

Come visit our Fire Station Museum and see the artwork on display upstairs. Some paintings are housed in our archive for space reasons, and we plan to rotate items over time. Works currently on exhibit by: Lucia Flagg Brooks, Etta Lominack Smith, Mary Virginia Petty Stringer, Lottie Malone Stinger, Charlotte Malone Stringer, Bird Hill Willey, Sallie Green Hill, Mary Powell Brooks, Rhema Odom Arthur, and Ora Cody.

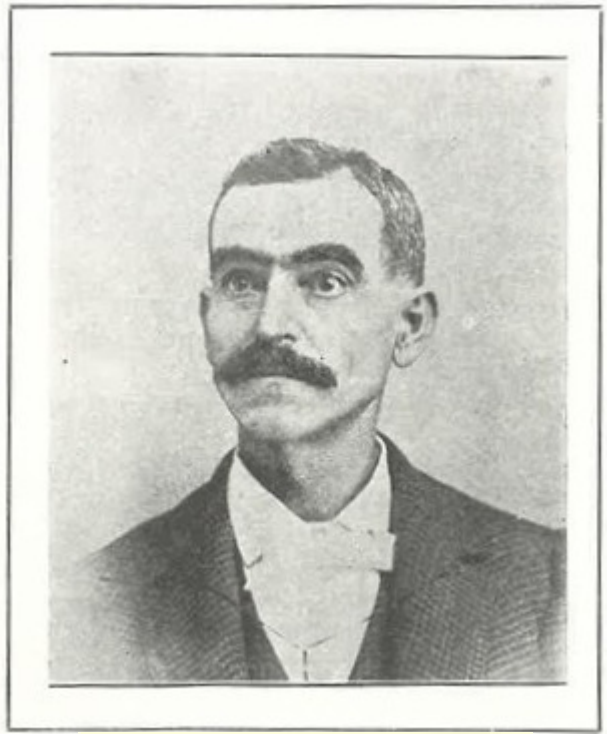


RECOLLECTIONS OF THE GREAT WAR

A.W. Sparks

Editor's Note: We've run reports in past issues of our newsletter regarding the A.W. Sparks history of the Civil War. Sparks survived the War; was active in Confederate Veteran Reunions and truly had a great memory. He collected his narratives through the 1890s and his book was published in 1901 in Tyler. I think the book has had a couple of reprintings and I hold a 1987 reprint from Tyler, Texas.

We will include the introductory chapter in which Sparks gives his background with the organization of his company in Mt. Vernon in September 1861. The company elects Charles S. Stewart as its captain. (Sparks spells the name "Stuart"). Lad Miller is elected 1st Lieutenant (Another name discrepancy – the man was named Lodebar and called "Lod" as best I can tell). I inherited portions of the Lodebar and Arthur Miller Surveys; still own land in the Arthur Miller Survey – about 5 miles east of Mt. Vernon. Stewart married into the Hughes family in 1833 and the Millers are tied in with both the Arthur, Burns and Hughes lines. The 2nd Lieutenant is James English – son of Campbell English – pioneer citizen buried in the Mt. Vernon cemetery. It's a great genealogical source and great history written by a native son of our county.



A.W. Sparks

The company is known as the Titus Grays and is part of the 9th Texas Cavalry of Ross' Texas Brigade. Within a few months the Titus Grays have crossed the Red River and moved north into the Indian Territory. In fighting Indians loyal to the Union, Col. Stewart is killed. The account of his death is graphic but worth including here as actual history involving our ancestors.

The book was republished and various adaptations are available online today, including a free online version graciously submitted by David J. Hightower (visit: <https://sites.rootsweb.com>). We hold a copy in our historical association library. It is fascinating reading and addresses the entire period of the War.

I'm working with a professional researcher to qualify some property for an official Texas Historical Commission marker and I've been reading lots of history. I pulled Sparks to check data regarding the Stewart arrival here and became fascinated with the general history set out by Sparks; lots of statistics as to battles, casualties – north and south; and personalities. You'll get a sense of that in the account of Stewart's death which we include in this article.

Stewart married Martha Cocke; daughter of Jesse Cocke and Eleanor Dykes. Cocke dies and Eleanor married William Hughes and they have a large family of children. Martha lives into her 90s; my family was fortunate to have that connection. Elder family members held the memory of Charles S. Stewart in high esteem; a man who had been killed in the first months of the war. When you read the Sparks history with his personal account of Stewart you understand the esteem. Stewart's widow dies in California and is buried there. A Stewart cousin comes back to visit 30 years ago; calls on me; a lawyer in Carmel, California; goes home and sends back the memories of the childhood home written by a Hughes cousin and Stewart descendant – writing of growing up in Mt. Vernon during the War.

In this issue of ECHOES we see the Sparks report of the Battle of Round Mountain. We have several slightly different versions because of the reports reaching back home. Traylor Russel even writes in FROM INDIAN SPRINGS TO THE RIVER JORDAN that my own Aunt Martha sent people after the War to retrieve Stewart's body to bring it home for proper burial. No: that would not have happened. Sorry, but the Hughes clan were not like the Ordways in William Humphries account of Civil War burials; no, no money for that sort of sentimental act. This was a woman who was running a hotel and farms and ranching operations. But get back to Sparks. A first-hand account and it's as good as any I've encountered. Mind you: Stewart is a leader among men. Local historians reported that after the Indian massacre of the Ripley family just east of Mt. Vernon on April 10, 1841, that Stewart mustered troops and marched north. They slaughtered the first Indians they found; a band of Choctaws camped on the banks of the Sulphur River. Okay: nothing to take pride in. But for people of Sparks generation, with a memory of hard times when Indian raids were common, there was no particular concern for the fact that innocent lives were taken. In any event: respect for Stewart from the first of the settlers here and continuing through veneration for his leadership and death in that hopeless Civil War remained well past the Sparks book publication in 1901. This year, we display American history and honor our

veterans who fought on a world stage. But we also have a history of very real wars – against Indians and against our fellow American – on this land.

And the curious overlay: that Joshua Foster Johnson – Mt. Vernon’s delegate to the February 1861 Secession Convention held in Austin, was among the 7 delegates out of over 200 delegates – who had voted against secession. A friend of Sam Houston. And, no doubt, Stewart, living close to Johnson and tied to this small town, probably shared Johnson’s views. But Sparks speaks of the rule of law and Stewart had followed that rule and fought with Texas for the Confederate Cause. The irony lies in the fact that Stewart, once slaying Indians, is ultimately the slain. You’ll find the Sparks account well-written and spell-binding.

The Sparks book is doubly valuable for genealogists. He gives biographical sketches of quite a few of his fellow soldiers; Charles Stewart among them. Sparks reports some 50 years after the fact that Stewart came in December 1841. From the way that people were traveling, I think Stewart may have been ranging through here as early as 1839. He acquires tracts of land along the major highway of the time – our branch of the Cherokee Trace which runs from Fort Towson in the Indian Territory in a southerly course to Nacogdoches. People are coming across one trail which was known as the National Road and branched off toward Texarkana and another route runs more easterly toward Atlanta and Cass County – Atlanta with the only antebellum courthouse still in use in Texas. Stewart’s brother-in-law (my ancestor) survives Stewart but dies in a field hospital in 1863 – with measles – Elkhorn Tavern. Lod Miller brings back letters and a wallet and the pocket watch owned by Hughes. Sparks says Lod resigned and went home; maybe he was so distressed over the death of his kinsman and he brought those remnants home to a young widow and her small child. We hold at least three of these Civil War-era wallets (mine bears the initials HCH) – come and check out Mike Millender’s military exhibit and look at tangible evidence of those who served in that saddest of American wars.

From “Recollections...” pp. 14-19 — I enlisted for Texas services from the home of my parents in Titus Co., Texas, in a company known as the Titus Greys, afterwards Company 1, 9th Texas Calvary of Ross’ Texas Brigade.

The Titus Greys [sic] were mostly young men between the age of 18 and 25, yet a few old men had enlisted, most of them having their sons in the same company. This writer first met with the company in the town of Mt. Vernon on the appointed day for marching to the camp for instruction. Chas. S. Stuart was elected Captain and Laad Miller 1st Lieutenant. All of the sergeants and corporals, not now remembered, were good men and filled their station with apparent dignity. In the afternoon we were presented with a beautiful flag by some of the Mt. Vernon ladies, with some appropriate remarks, to which Capt. Stuart responded in a business like way. As tactics were unknown, we faced to the right in column of twos with guns advanced and received orders to march. A few miles out from town we encamped for the night, and one soldier at least was busy examining the horses, guns, and knives of the company which were varied as the circumstances of the many soldiers who composed the company.

There were rifles, flint and steel, but most of them were full stock percussion muzzle-loading machines that had been in family use for killing bear, deer and other wild animals, which at that time were abundant. Double-barrel shot guns were the favorite arms, and there were many different stamps, from the “London twist” to the malleable cast barrel. Not a few pistols were in the command, and they were in great demand by the officers, who expected to use them as

side-arms, but it is worthy of notice that each soldier carried a huge knife, usually made from an old mill file, shaped by the blacksmith and ground according to the fancy of the owner. The horses were a fair average of the Texas mustang type, but not a few were found in the company that had strains of noted blood in their veins. The clothing of the men was light and unsuited for hard service, but almost all wore long boots made of Texas tanned leather with a large flap at the front of the leg to protect the knee. Most of our blankets were pieces of carpets taken from floors to be used as bedding during the war.



Civil War-era wallet, Hughes

Recollections... (continued)

The march to Brogden Springs was completed in about four days without any event now remembered, except an effort on the part of our officers to display the company as though they were well disciplined soldiers, an effort which completely failed. When we reached the town of Sherman, then only a village of probably not more than four or five hundred inhabitants, who were supplied with a one-horse mail and two or three stores, where all kinds of merchandise were offered on sale, the company was ordered to march through in good order and not break ranks under any circumstances until a halt should be called, when those who wished could go to town to do the needed errands. But behold, when we had made our stately march through the populous city there were present only about forty of the one-hundred and fourteen men who constituted the rank and file of the Titus Grays. Captain Stuart was sad, and I do not believe he ever got over his sadness, on account of the behavior of his company. After a short halt those in line marched to the camp which was about ten miles from Sherman and encamped. The night was passed without sleep, for every few minutes the noise of some arriving squad was echoed for a distance equal to the most powerful voices, who came in by twos, by fives, by trios, all apparently mellowed on some kind of an intoxicant found in the village. Some were quarreling, some had been racing, some had been fighting, some were cursing, some were singing, and when we reached Camp Brogden it was clear to my mind that all had been drinking.

The company was encamped on the branch below the spring in a beautiful grove, and the first military duty ever assigned to the writer was to go on guard with his gun and prevent soldiers from watering their horses above a certain line where water was taken for camp use. I had great difficulty in performing the duty, as citizens of the country and visitors seemed unable to realize that while in our camp they were subject to the same water restrictions as the soldiers. They would ride into the water and inform us that we had nothing to do with them and I have no doubt that serious troubles would have been the result if it had not been that our guns were not allowed to be loaded. One member of the company emphasized his order to let no man ride into the water with the butt of his gun on the head of an offender, and after this we had less trouble.

Other companies were encamped nearby when we arrived, and almost all the men had some peculiar stripe or badge which was soon known as the company uniform. I will here say that our company was known by a blue stripe on the shoulders of our jackets, Captain Duncan's company had a black stripe, Captain Hart's had yellow and others had red.

Our time was occupied in drilling and the training of our horses in single companies until all the companies were in camp and the field officers elected. W. B. Sims was elected Colonel. He was a large man and of fine appearance and had a voice equal to the modern fog horn. Quail was elected Lieutenant-Colonel. He was not so large as Col. Sims, but what he lacked in stature was more than made up in grace. He was the finest appearing horseman I had then ever beheld; he was the military man of the regiment, and best in drill. Major N. B. Towne was also a fine looking officer and commanded greatest respect among the soldiers. He rode a pied horse, about the best horse in the regiment. Dr. James Robertson was appointed surgeon, he being a private of Stuart's company, a man of great skill, as was afterward shown. Dr. Prewitt, also of Stuart's company, was made Assistant Surgeon and D. W. Jones, of the same company, was appointed Adjutant, after which the Captains met and drew lots for their position in regimental line with the following result:

Capt. T. G. Berry, Company A. Tarrant County.	
“ Sid. Smith, “ B. Fannin “	
“ J. E. McCool, “ C. Grayson “	
“ M. J. Brinson, “ D. Tarrant “	
“ J. C. Hart, “ E. Red River “	
“ M. E. Duncan, “ F. Titus “	
“ L. D. King, “ G. Hopkins “	
“ J. D. Wright, “ H. Lamar “	
“ Chas. Stuart, “ I. Titus “	

J. H. Williams, Co. K. Hunt and Hopkins Counties.

W. B. Sims was appointed Quartermaster and Capt. J. D. Wright was made Commissary.

Lieutenant E. L. Dohoney was elected to succeed Capt. Wright and commanded company H.

After the election of officers and the formation of the regiment which, I think, was on October 14th, 1860 (we had been previously sworn into the State service, date not remembered, but I think we served the State about three months before we were mustered into the Confederate service), we were reviewed by Colonel Sims, who made us a speech in which he told us “we were soldiers enlisted for the war, and from that day we were to regard war, civil war, as our profession, and in life it is the duty of every man to study, to understand his profession, and that his purpose would be to make us effective soldiers;” a purpose he evidently carried out to the letter, for I do not believe Col. Sims ever thought off anything else but war. While he commanded the regiment his commands were positive, his discipline firm, yet his nature was noble, lovable and brave. He was a born commander among men and, no doubt, would have scored his name high in rank but for his early disabilities.



C.1841 horse, Etsy/antiqueprintstore

After the regiment was formed we were drilled mostly in battalions, Lieutenant-Colonel Quail commanding the first and Major Towne the second, with Col. Sims always on the field to note the progress of his young professionals, and it was during this schooling that I first heard of trial by court martial. I do not remember the names of the court, but recollect that Lieutenant Miller was a member from company I. The trial was at Col. Sims' headquarters tent and the case, as I remember it, was of some poor fellow who had stolen something, probably clothing or bedding, from members of his company. The charge was formally proven, the judgment of the court was "guilty" and the penalty was that he be dishonorably discharged and to the music of the fife and drum marched through all the camps to the outer guard line, where he was to receive his belongings and depart, never to return. The order was carried out to the letter, and never before had I seen a man so debased. His face was covered with that shame that cannot be transferred to this paper. It was hideous; it bespoke that he was even too low in manhood's scale to be killed by the country's enemy. I never knew his name or what became of him; only this I know "He was drummed out of the camp." There was also another case but whether it was tried as in the court martial I do not recollect, but think it was, the crime as charged, all that I remember is that he was hanged to a tree until he was dead and no tears were shed at his burial. His crime I think, was committed outside of our lines and citizens were the witnesses, but he, a soldier, was tried and executed in our camps. He was called Major Bell, and, I remember, claimed to be "Old Montgomery of Kansas," a noted drill master. These events of discipline that secured in my memory had a great influence on the command. Disgrace and death were the penalties, the former being considered most severe.

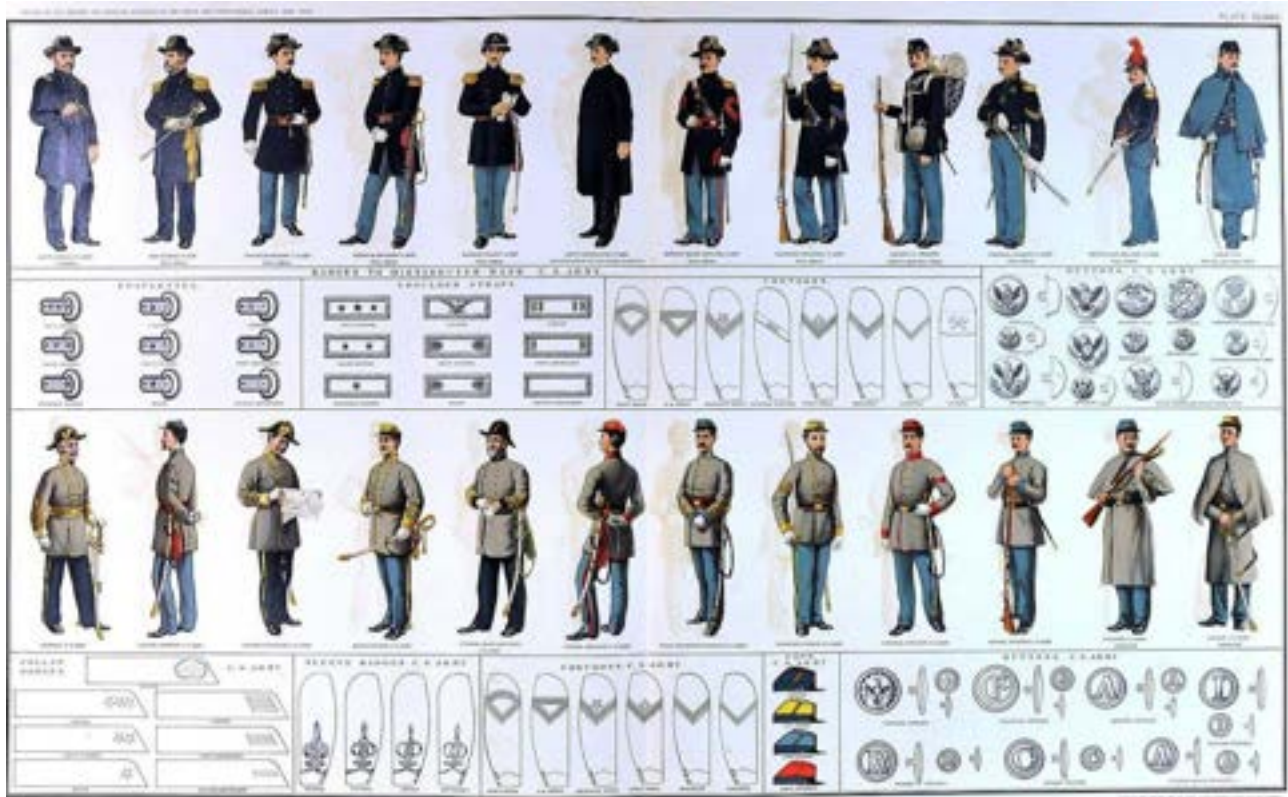


Image of Plate CLXXII, Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies

From "Recollections..." pp. 32-37

Captain Stuart was placed in command of the advance and called for his company to forward with a renewed energy. Each man was thrilled for we felt the long chase would have come to an issue and we all felt that victory was ours. Major Rose, in his work, explains the plans of attack, but I was so carried away with the thought of Captain Stuart's bay horse. I had no doubt but he would catch the Gray and I felt like "Old Pole" would be a very close second, and with these thoughts uppermost in my mind I did not know or care how the others were disposed of, for my aim in the battle was to kill or capture the white horse and his famed rider. I never looked for anything by Captain Stuart and his company. We rode out on the high prairie and just south of east of our position and in plain view quietly stood the white horse and his ever alert rider mounted. On either side of the Vidette at a distance of 400 or 600 yards there were

Recollections... (continued)

some small creeks with lower lands on which there was some timber, the tops of which could be seen for four or five miles, where the prairie appeared to be shut in by the streams coming together, forming a landscape view that would be represented by a sharp letter V and about midway between the two projecting prongs.

The company was first ordered front into line and from this position could see the smoke as it rose from the camp of the enemy along both streams to the left and to the right, and straight in front at about 600 yards distance was the only living object that I saw who had, while we were performing said maneuver, set the grass on fire. This was about 3 o'clock, Nov. 19th, 1861. Captain Stuart then ordered an advance, with eyes set on the gray horse the soldiers could not be held back with a line, but like beasts of prey they flew at the Vidette, each man hoping to get within range before he reached cover. Away we went, my heart swelled that old Pole was still kept a close second to Captain Stuart's noted bay. We soon had him on the run and we reserved our fire hoping to get him, though we followed him to his den. By some means as if by magic he managed to fire the prairie several times while on the run, which was a long one, for the Vidette rode for the juncture of the two creeks—and we close after him. When within 40 or 50 yards we received a volley of balls and arrows that were discharged by a hidden enemy who had concealed themselves behind the bank, but from our close proximity we saw them when they raised to fire upon us. Captain Stuart discharged his pistol that he carried in his hand and reigned up his horse with the command of "left into line" and as the company dashed into line each man discharged his piece into the half hidden ranks of the Indians. The company was rapidly and nicely forming with a good effect when on the extreme left of the line Lieutenant English called to those on the left to aim to the left as the Indians were now enfilading our line with a seven fire. Captain Stuart carried one of those peculiar pistols that were so constructed that their use required the use of three fingers, the second and third fingers were used to cock the pistol and the first, which was used to shoot by pulling the trigger as with an ordinary pistol, and while Captain Stuart was firing he would raise the muzzle of the pistol up and fire as his arm was on a downward movement, and while his hand was raised after cocking his pistol, he was struck in the forehead by a large ball that passed out a little to the left of the center of the back of his head, and he made an unusual noise and I looked and he was falling forward and to the right of his horse, which he held well in gather with the left hand, firmly holding the bridle when the body fell, it so turned that the hand raised with the pistol fell across the front of the saddle and the force of the grip discharged the pistol and the ball passed very close to my face, "fearful close." The ball that killed him on passing out of his head threw a large wad of his brain upon the sleeve and collar of my coat.

One of our Lieutenants, seeing the rapid movements of the enemy, ordered us to retreat and load as retreating, an order that was obeyed with some sulliness, and as soon as loaded our guns were immediately discharged upon our pursuing enemy who were peppering us with a deadly aim, aided by the glare of the light from the burning prairie as set by their famed scout. It was about sundown when we first fired into their camp, and dark soon aided them to keep concealed, and by the reason of the firelight they continued the fight until late at night, we disputing every inch of the ground for more than two miles, and I was getting enough of it and beginning to wonder where the regiment was, when all as a flash of electricity the prairie was in a long, smooth line of fire from the regiment, who had, by separating and taking a part of our Indian force with each subdivision, had as completely ambushed the Indians as they had ambushed Stuart's

company on the beginning of the fight. A loud roar told us of our relief and we thought thank "God" we had passed through the line and now we had nothing to do but look on. The fight was very severe for only a short time, when the yell of our Chocktaws and Chickesaws, whom we had by this time learned to distinguish, told us of the victory. The route was complete and was only followed to the limits of skylighting from the prairie fire now burning furiously in all directions. The fight was called off, our regiment to the call of the bugle and the Indians to a peculiar whoop known to themselves.

We encamped for the remainder of the night in line, each man in arms while a strong chain guard kept watch, while the regiment slept.



The earliest signs of approaching daylight found us ready to renew the battle but as light appeared our advance found the enemy gone. He had utilized the remainder of the night in a rapid but noiseless retreat and as before there was no trail to be followed, for when they slip off no two of them appear to travel the same trail. But the fruit of our engagement was to be seen in their deserted camp. There were about twenty wagons, mostly loaded with Indian plunder, consisting of hides of animals used for bedding, and many curious things that to me were without name or value and were all very dirty. There was one wagon loaded with provisions, but I was told had all been poisoned before they left it and a strong guard was placed in charge of it to prevent the men from eating before it could be burned. I know it was burned in the presence of starving men. The wagons were of modern make and in good condition, for I remember it was here I saw my first striped thimble skinned wagons. Besides these wagons there were large herds of stock and we soon had plenty of beef without bread or salt, and horses without number were gathered but poor and in a starving condition. We burned all the wagons and most of the plunder, but some of the soldiers appropriated a lot of Buffalo, Bear and Wolf hides that had been prepared and used for bedding. And in addition there were taken quite a lot of prisoners who were duly turned over to their own race, and we gathered up the wounded and dressed their wounds and buried our dead among the rest. Our beloved Captain Stuart, who had been regarded by his company much like a child regards its father, and the deep sorrow we felt for him will never be expressed in words on paper. I will only say our greatest hopes were buried with him.



It was a very difficult matter to go over the whole field and find all the dead but as several of us had seen the Captain fall it was our special lot to bury him, and we found him, but not before he had been seen by the enemy, for he fell within one hundred yards of their camp. His body was stripped but he was not scalped, which led me to believe that his body had been found only by the camp squaws, for the warriors would have scalped the body—all the others of our dead were scalped. At the time of his death Captain Stuart had in his pockets some Burr Oak acorns, as I have before stated, and these acorns were arranged in a line upon his naked body—more like the work of children at play than the acts of warfare. We wrapped him in a blanket and placed the body on a horse and conveyed it several miles from the spot where he fell and under cover of the darkness we made a grave with only our hack knives and neatly wrapped in a blanket with a vault covered with flat stones, we placed the body and filled the grave, after which we burned some brush upon the place to hide all signs of a grave where we left him. Our losses in this engagement were several, but their names and company were not known to me, some we found had been tortured to death with fire, others shot, and we had several wounded, one or two severely. They were moved by means of a horse litter, one poor fellow I recollect that had his jaw broken and if there ever was a time when a man needed his jaw it was when we had only tough beef, and no way to cook it but to broil, but we managed to make a broth for this man and he lived for years after the war.

On the morning of the 21st we started to our wagon train, then camped on Arkansaw [sic] river not far above Ft. Gibson...

DATE PUDDING —ROOTS IN OUR VICTORIAN PAST

B.F. Hicks

I had my grandmother's standard date pudding (a pudding based on crumbled biscuits—essentially a bread pudding)—but thought I'd give my mom's a try; what a surprise. Christine Hughes Hicks (1922-1991; 1939 graduate of Mt. Vernon High School; off and on attendance at East Texas Teachers College during the war years until marriage interrupts her intended study, with a family following. We don't use eggplant, salsify, beets or rutabagas; my mom used them all. I didn't appreciate her efforts at the time or even as a young adult, but the appreciation comes now as I look back to her diverse embrace of such a great range of foods and her insistence that we boys "try everything," and we did at pain of hunger. I've taken her boxes of index cards and entered them into my computer system with a searchable index. I won't say they are all excellent, but I can offer an unqualified recommendation for her date pudding. This was probably copied from a recipe used by her mother-in-law (Pauline Ivey Hicks 1876-1956). The Pauline Hicks records list many recipes for dates ranging from date cakes and date bars with dates used as a standard ingredient in many recipes. Dates were a staple; sweet; stored easily; readily available. A Victorian staple. I remember my mother's pride in serving up an Osgood pie – some fairly obscure antique formula using dates. Cousin Jabez Galt made his grandmother Ivey's date loaf candy at holidays. And my grandmother Agnes Hughes made a dark layered fruit cake with a heavy filling of boiled mashed dates. Then I chanced on the date pudding recipe in my mother's hand.

DATE PUDDING Christine Hughes Hicks

Ingredients

- 1 C chopped dates
- 1 t soda
- 1 C boiling water

Mix and let cool

1. Combine following ingredients in mixing bowl:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 1 C chopped pecans | 1 T shortening |
| 1 egg | 1 C sugar |
| 1 C flour | 1/8 t salt |
| 1 t vanilla | |

2. Mix and then put both mixtures together.

Bake at 375 degrees for 35-45 minutes. Bake in rectangular loaf pan. Take out of oven; punch holes with an ice pick and pour 1 tall can Carnation milk over hot pudding. Can be stored for a week in refrigerator. Top with whipped cream if serving warm or with hard sauce.



Hard Sauce:

- 1/4 C. butter (or vegetable shortening)
- 1/2 C. powdered sugar
- 2 T. lemon juice
- Salt
- Rum

Beat until very fluffy. Chill in a bowl and serve with hot gingerbread or any other hot cake. **OPTIONAL:** 1/4 cup chopped nuts, shredded coconut, or chopped candied fruits.

NOTE: Grease that loaf pan. My mom assumed some knowledge on the part of anyone taking on her recipe. Alas: if you don't bake much, you don't know that now we just coat the pan with a no-stick spray. An essential step. I slice and lift the slices out of the pan; this is truly more a Victorian pudding and doesn't lift out like a loaf.

bon appétit

EARLY DAYS IN FRANKLIN COUNTY

Editor's Note: The following excerpt is from articles Col. Dan T. Bolin write in the Optic Herald, on May 15th and May 22nd, 1925. These letters to the editor were collected in the work EARLY DAYS IN FRANKLIN COUNTY. We make this book available free to our members and the students of Franklin County—funding provided by the Estate of Ray Loyd Johnson . Books are \$10 and are available for purchase on our webpage, at our museum, and by mail (add \$5 for S&H). All proceeds from sale go into the operating fund for our historical association.

May 15, 1925

In my last article I failed to state that the seven men who served as commissioners in laying off Franklin county served without pay and I mention this now in order to show the intense earnestness and patriotism of these old-time citizens. I have heretofore stated that there were 900 voters that participated in our first election, all of whom were required to register before being qualified to vote. My father registered this precinct (No. 1), Sam Stanley Precinct No. 2, Capt. F. M. Hastings Precinct No. 4. I cannot now recall who registered the other two precincts. There were three voting boxes on that occasion; Precincts 1 and 2 voted in the old wooden building known as the Johnson building where the brick building which is owned by H. H. Weaver, near where the public well now stands. This box was under the management of Major A. T. Smith and Thomas Bolin. Precinct No. 3 was held in a wooden store house to the northeast of the old wooden row owned by Mr. J. E. Brooks and was presided over by Mr. Thomps Morris and W. A. Binion. I will say in this connection that this store house was donated by Mr. Brooks to the county to be used for a courthouse until the new courthouse was built; this old building is still standing, although considerably worn by age. Precinct Nos. 4 and 5 held their election in a wooden building where the Mattinson Abstract office is located and was under the management of Capt. Hastings and others. The chief attraction of the day besides the excitement of the election was horse racing; the race track being located about a half mile to the northwest of town. I do not now remember of hearing of a single fight that day; however, the saloons were closed on that occasion, but the gambling spirit was manifested by a general exchange of pocket knives, money being scarce.

I will now come to the result of the election; Mt. Vernon was elected county seat by a large majority over both of its opponents. Joe Templeton was elected sheriff, getting almost as many votes as all three of his opponents. George F. Yates, father of Esq. C. S. Yates of this city, was elected county clerk; W. B. Stringer, another Primitive Baptist preacher and grandfather of P. W. and Cullen Stringer of this city, was elected county treasurer. We had no county attorney, tax assessor, county judge or county commissioners in those days. There were 5 justices of the peace elected from their respective precincts who acted in the same capacity that our county judge and commissioners do at present; they also assessed the taxes of their precincts. T. M. Harton of this precinct (No. 1) was elected chief justice, Smith Walker was elected from precinct No. 2. Rufus Mann, who lived at Hopewell, was elected from Precinct No. 3; B. F. Morris was elected from No. 4 and T. W. Templeton from No. 5. The entire county voted in the election of officers for every precinct.



Joe Templeton

OUR FIRST CONGRESSMAN

Our first congressman was the Hon. David B. Culberson, having been elected to that position in 1874. He was a resident of Jefferson. He succeeded Judge Wm. P. McLean of Mt. Pleasant who was not a candidate at that time. Col. Culberson was nominated in a convention held at Sulphur Springs. His leading opponent being Col. Charles DeMorse, editor of the Clarksville Standard. Gen. Walter P. Lane and Hon. Ben H. Epperson's names were also before that convention, but I am not right sure as to Mr. Epperson being an avowed candidate. He was an ex-member of Congress. They were both residents of Marshall. Col. Culberson served in congress without intermission for 22 years. He was an ex-confederate soldier and leading criminal lawyer of East Texas and was the father of our late Senator Chas. A. Culberson. I will say in this connection that the public records of these two distinguished citizens are too well known for the writer to offer any eulogy, only to say they were faithful to every trust.

FIRST DISTRICT JUDGE

Our first district judge, who was already serving in this district, was J. H. Rogers of Jefferson. He had been an officer under General Winfield Scott when he fought the Seminole Indians in the Everglades of Florida. He had also been an officer under Gen. Sam Houston in the war between the Republic of Texas and Mexico. These facts I gathered from Judge Rogers myself whom I was personally acquainted with. He died about 20 years ago at the age of 92 in Sulphur Springs, Texas.

Early Days (continued)

FIRST DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Our first district attorney was W. J. Sparks who had been serving in that capacity for several years. He was an ex-confederate soldier, having been colonel of his regiment in Johnson's army, and you may know by that he was where the bullets flew thick and fast. Col. Sparks has quite a number of old friends and relatives still living in Franklin and Hopkins counties.

ONLY ONE LAWYER IN COUNTY

Our county had only one lawyer at the time of its organization - Capt. John P. Hill, father of G. P. Hill of this city. He was a Virginian by birth and was an ex-member of the Texas Legislature. The writer was too young to know the time, but he has often heard the story told: While Capt. Hill was in the legislature the corporations had the renowned Professor Hurley employed to phrenologize the heads of its members; when asked what he thought of the different members he quickly pointed to Capt. Hill and said, "Fight shy of that man - you haven't money enough to buy him."

May 15, 1925

I made mention in my last article that Franklin county had but one lawyer when organized in 1875. We were better supplied with physicians; there were five in Mt. Vernon - Drs. W.C. Wright, R. Green, Leonidas Collins, T.M. Pattillo and T.C. Dodson. Old Gray Rock had Dr. Wright and Dr. Lee Griffin. It can be truthfully said of the five above named doctors that they were all good physicians and most worthy gentlemen.

Dr. Wright came here several years before the Civil War from Tennessee, and was a practicing physician when he came. He raised a large family, the last survivor of them being Mrs. C.C. Vaughan of this town. He died in 1890. Dr. Green came to Texas when a boy; was a Virginian by birth. He began practicing before the Civil War. He too raised a large family, being the father of Dr. C.J. Green of Durant, Okla., Mrs. W.H. Arrington, Mrs. G.P. Hill and James and Miss Minnie Green who are all well known in this vicinity, and Mrs. Fannie Lewis of Coleman. He died in 1885.

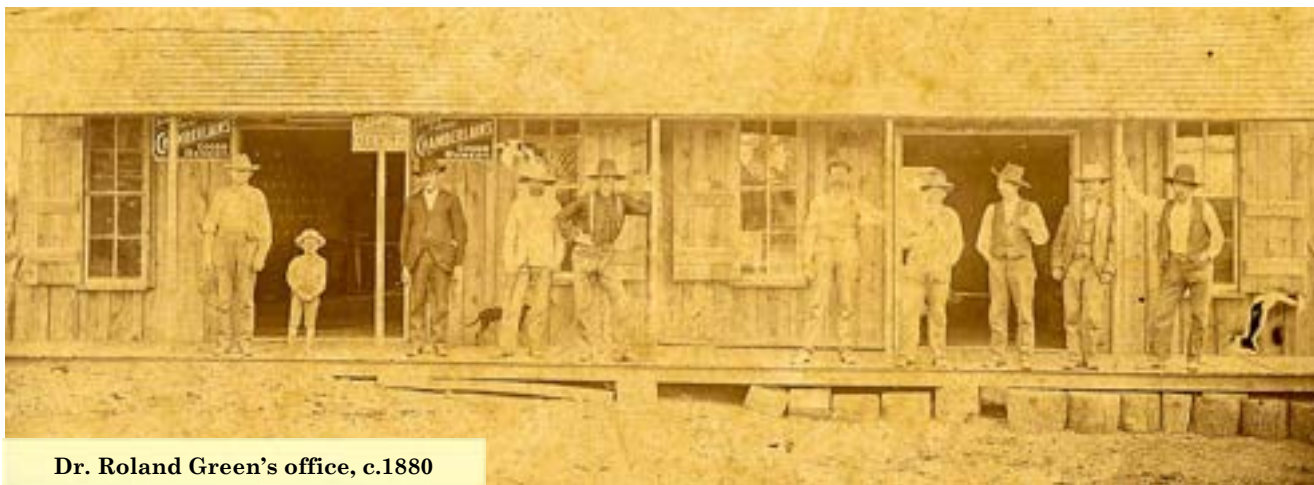
Dr. Collins came to Texas from North Carolina several years before the Civil War; was a practicing physician when he came, locating in Mt. Vernon. He was the father of Brice Collins now of Paris, Texas, and was also a brother-in-law of the Turner brothers who were leading citizens at that time. He died in Sulphur Springs in 1879.

Dr. Pattillo came to Mt. Vernon about the close of the Civil War. He was a North Carolinian by birth. He married a daughter of Mr. Robert J. Holbrook, an old and respected merchant of this town. Dr. Pattillo raised a family, some of whom are now dead. I am not posted in regard to the members of his family now living. He died in this town in 1888.

Dr. Dodson was also from North Carolina. He came to Texas in January 1870 and soon afterwards located in Mt. Vernon. He was an uncle of Dr. Pattillo and father of Mrs. Wm. Miller of Oklahoma, deceased; Mrs. Hiram Glass of Austin and Mrs. Bascom Boyd of Texarkana. He practiced in Mt. Vernon for a great number of years. He died in 1905.

I am not posted as to the birth places of Drs. Wright and Lee Griffin of Gray Rock, but know they both had the reputation of being nice gentlemen and good physicians.

Dr. A.G.V. Doney was practicing at Hopewell, seven miles southeast of Mt. Vernon, but I am not posted as to his early history, but he was known to be a fine physician and most worthy gentleman, who raised a fine family. He died in Sulphur Springs in 1890.



Dr. Roland Green's office, c.1880

THREE CHURCHES HERE

There were three churches in this town at the time – the Baptist, Christian, and Methodist. The Baptist church was located on the hill half a mile east of the city. Rev. R.W. Billups of Sulphur Bluff was the pastor at that time and continued to be for several years. The Christian church was located south on the highway about where Thomas and David Holder's residences are now located. Rev. James Baird of Lamar County was its pastor. The Methodist church was completed that year (1875) and was located on the present site; the Rev. Lamb, regular circuit rider, was pastor. I remember the first protracted meeting that was held in their new church; it was a great meeting. The funeral of Mr. Jno. D. Parchman, an old and respected citizen of this and father of James and Frank Parchman, was preached on Sunday at the beginning of the meeting by Dr. John H. McLean who is still living and resides in Dallas. He is a brother of the late judge Wm. P. McLean of Ft. Worth.

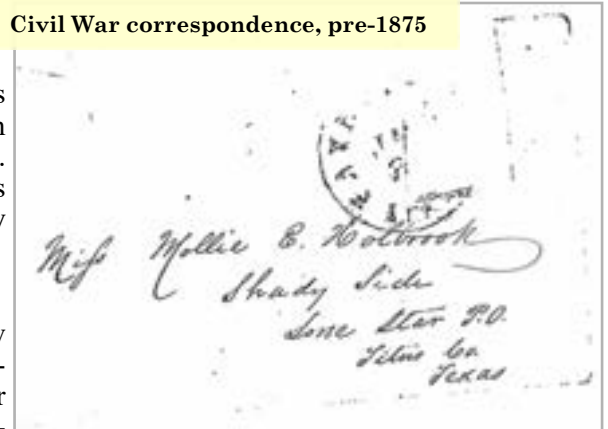
RUTH HOTEL

There was one hotel in Mt. Vernon when it became a county seat; it was situated on the south side of the square; the building and yard covered the space where the First National Bank and the next three buildings to the east are standing. It was owned and operated by Capt. Rufus Ruth, stepfather of J.L. Rutherford. This hotel was an old landmark; it had been built too long for the writer to know any of its early history. It was purchased by F.M. Pirtle, now of Oklahoma City, in about the year 1897 and removed to make room for the four brick buildings that now occupy the space.

FORMERLY LONE STAR

Prior to the election of Mt. Vernon as county seat of Franklin County the name of the post office was Lone Star, Texas. It was changed to Mt. Vernon just after the organization of the county in 1875. I don't remember the month or the exact time of the year. J.L. Rutherford was serving as postmaster when the town's name was changed from Lone Star and continued to serve until succeeded by Mrs. C.G. Parker in 1884.

Civil War correspondence, pre-1875



FIRST JAIL BUILT

I will now take up some of the business of the county. After the new officers were sworn in, one among the first official acts the five justices of the peace or county financiers did was to let a contract for the building of a new jail. Mr. John Brem of this county was awarded the contract a cost of \$1600; it was a wooden structure, two stories high, with a stairway going up on the outside at the west end, with two rooms on the lower floor; those two rooms were used for the county clerk and sheriff's offices until the new courthouse was built. The new jail was located on the north side of the square.

OUR FIRST OFFICERS

I made mention in a former article that we had no officers at that time but county judge, county commissioners, tax assessor and county attorney. A constitutional convention met in Austin in September 1875 and created these offices that I now refer to. This convention had as delegates from northeast Texas such distinguished citizens as Rev. J.F. Johnson of Franklin County, Judge Wm. P. McLean of Titus, Col. W. L. Crawford of Marion County, Col. Charles DeMorse of Red River County, Hon. E.L. Dohoney of Lamar County, and Hon. Jonathan Russell of Wood County. Such men as these were among that memorable body. Judge McLean who died very recently in Ft. Worth near the age of 89 was the last survivor of that convention with possibly one exception.



Col. DeMorse was editor of the Clarksville Standard, said to be the oldest paper in the state. An interview was in one of our daily papers from Col. Crawford a few years ago in which he stated he had a bill passed in that convention to make our poll tax five dollars as a voting qualification. His bill was strongly opposed by J.F. Johnson who got one of his colleagues who had voted for it to move to reconsider, which was carried.

Col. Crawford stated that when his bill came up the second time that Rev. Johnson made the most powerful speech he ever heard against it; the result was his bill was badly defeated. He said that was not all - for a little more he believed they would have thrown him out the window. This convention under its new organization called a state election to be held in February 1876.

Delegates at the convention of 1875—see <https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/>

Early Days (continued)

Our first officers under the constitution were H.L. Williams, County Judge; J.B. Stringer, County Attorney; W.B. Stringer (re-elected) County Treasurer; Joseph D. Templeton (re-elected) Sheriff; J.H. King, Tax Assessor; George F. Yates, County Clerk (re-elected); W.C. Wright Jr., District Clerk who soon afterward resigned, and Esq. C. S. Yates was appointed to fill out his unexpired term. Our four new commissioners were Esq. B. F. Teague, Noah Smith, F.M. Hastings and Jno. C. Terrell. Esq. Teague was the father of J.S. and Dr. Joe Teague of this town.

Our representative elected from this district which was composed of Franklin and Titus Counties by this time was the Hon. Mack Harris of Titus. He was nominated by the Grangers, an order which had become very popular in the country at that time. The convention to nominate a candidate for state senator under the new constitution was held in Mt. Vernon a short while before the election in February 1876 was a long drawn-out fight, the candidates being Col. W.J. Swain of Red River County and Col. Nelson and Hon. Wash Cole, both of Hopkins County. Neither of its candidates could command strength enough from the smaller counties to give them the nomination. Col. Swain held Red River County. This convention was in session 2 or 3 days in the meantime. Several names were put before it trying to affect a compromise. Finally, the name of Col. W.A. Wortham, editor of the Sulphur Springs Gazette, of Hopkins County, who was chairman of the convention was presented. He seemed to satisfy all parties. Col. Wortham accepted the nomination by thanking the convention in one of his nice speeches which was very characteristic of Col. Wortham. He was elected at the regular election.

Our new District Judge was B.T. Estes of Texarkana who defeated Judge Rogers for re-election along with Capt. W.H. Christian of Mt. Pleasant and Capt. George Todd and Judge W.L. Crawford of Jefferson. Judge Estes was the father of Judge Lee Estes of Texarkana, our present federal judge.



MUSEUM HOURS

The Fire Station Museum is **OPEN** Monday-Friday: **9:00 AM to 1:00 PM** AND other times by appointment. Call **903-537-9300** or **903-537-2264** and let us know how we can accommodate you or your group. You can also email our office: fchaoffice@gmail.com

This is a free service in our community—we hope to see you!

To **VOLUNTEER** as a docent for a few hours at the museums each week or on any of our ongoing projects, please call **903-537-9300** to let us know. We'd love to have you as part of our team.

LYNDON (SONNY) REED—US NAVY FROGMAN Gail Reed

On Memorial Day, Monday, May 25th, Franklin County Historical Association will officially open our veteran's exhibit in the Fire Station Museum. Many branches of the military are showcased and we look forward to hosting this event. There are stories associated with these heroes and some will be told at the opening. The following is a personal story from my family.

Not long after the attack on Pearl Harbor, my father-in-law, Lyndon (Sonny) Reed joined the Navy. During the nine weeks of basic training, it was discovered that Sonny was an outstanding swimmer. As a result, he was sent to Fort Pierce, Florida, to be trained as a Frogman. It was a particularly rigorous training that specialized in the early use of scuba gear. After months of grueling work there, he was transferred to Norfolk, Virginia, where even more expert training took place.

Navy frogmen were elite combat swimmers and combat demolition units, primarily originating from WWII Underwater Demolition Teams and serving as predecessors to the U.S. Navy SEALs. They specialize in underwater reconnaissance, obstacle demolition, and covert operations.

Some of their duties involved clearing beach obstacles for amphibious landings and conducting reconnaissance, underwater demolition, and later evolved into counter-guerrilla and clandestine operations, especially in Korea and Vietnam. Like most servicemen and women, Sonny didn't talk much about his time in the military, but a handful of letters to his parents, Lorenzo and Leona Reed, told of some of his experiences while training in Fort Pierce.

U.S.N.A.F.B.
Small Boat Camp #1
Fort. Pierce, Fla.

July 13, 1943

Dear Folks,

It's a nice day here. How is it in Texas? I hope you're all ok. I am fine, but the mosquitoes! If it weren't for the mosquitoes and sand fleas this place would be ok.

We have been on detail here and last night we had a practice air raid. I should be getting my orders soon. I hope I'm sent to the west coast instead of the east coast. I will have a lot to tell you after the war is over, but I can't now or I will get into big trouble.

How's my little colt? I bet he's growing. Are the crops good this year? I saw a few patches of good corn down here, but there's not much farming land.

I wish you would send me my ball glove. Some of us would like to play in our off time. I'd better go. It's almost lights out here. Tell everyone hello and I hope they're doing well. Write me often!

—Love, Sonny



Top Picture:

Sonny is pictured with his military mates —back row, second to right, with right arm stretched out.



Bottom Picture:

Sonny sent out his letter "Via Air Mail". Notice the period stamp and date.

ON THE HOME FRONT WITH JOE GANDY

John Hicks

*On his mother's side of the family, John's Hughes relations settled on the Cherokee Trace in the Republic of Texas in the late 1830s. He and his two brothers are seventh-generation natives of what today is Franklin County. On his father's side, his grandparents came to Texas from Alabama at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. The author holds master's degrees in political science and divinity and supported his family mainly as a teacher, a pastor, and a hospice chaplain. He lives today in the Mt. Vernon home built by his maternal grandparents in 1927. His wife Mary died in 2013. Their two sons, Caleb and Daniel, live and work in other places these days. Here, we share selections from chapter 33-36 of John's book *BOTTOMLAND CREDENTIALS*.*

At thirty-one years of age, a bottomland farmer named Joseph Warren Gandy began forty years of sharing his home-spun wisdom in the "County Correspondence" section of the Mt. Vernon Optic Herald. On August 28, 1914, he wrote the first of his "Coon Creek" reports from the bottomlands of southwest Franklin County.

As the year 1940 brought new unprecedented troubles to the nation's horizons, Gandy's weekly columns had for years been a popular feature in our local newspaper. He had grown in stature as a writer and gained widespread respect as a backwoods philosopher. Then, having legally changed his name so as to appear on the ballot as Coon Creek Gandy, he ran for office; and voters of Franklin, Hopkins, and Delta Counties (District 126) elected him to the Texas State House of Representatives.

For the March 19, 1943 edition of the Mt. Vernon Optic Herald, the Honorable Mr. Gandy mailed his column from Austin, where the Forty-Eighth Texas Legislature was in session. We baby boomers, and those who have come after us, tend to think of the whole country as unified at that time, in struggling through World War II. But the representative from Coon Creek gives us a different impression.

To his discomfort, Gandy found that political parties in Austin had trouble working together, each one treating any disagreement on public policy as excluding a person not only from party membership, but virtually from the human race.

"Eleemosynary," the Honorable Mr. Gandy was heard to say during his first term in Austin. "Yes, I like the sound of it: "Eleemosynary." If I can get elected again, I'll ask for that committee." According to the online Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a grammarian once asserted, regarding the word "eleemosynary," that "a long and learned word like this should only be used under the stress of great need."

I could easily imagine Gandy himself making that comical remark. But, during his years in the Texas State House of Representatives, one of several committees on which he served was entitled "State Eleemosynary and Reformatory Institutions." I taught Texas Government at a community college for a decade and never heard of this committee. However, it must have done worthwhile work: The word eleemosynary means "charitable." I suppose Gandy did see the "great need" of what the scripture calls "a more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31).

"Coon Creek" columns written in Austin for the folks back home addressed some of the specific and serious problems faced by constituents; rationing during World War II, for instance, raised questions about hardships on the Home Front. In the Mt. Vernon Optic Herald dated April 2, 1943, Gandy used a characteristic humorous approach but indicated his consternation. He observed the problems through the magnifying glass of committee hearings, of course, in the state legislature:

"Pandemonium reigned in the big food stores for the past few days. People apparently have been scared to death for fear that the Government was going to put all the food in the world under tubs and then sit down on the tubs."

But food was not the only thing in short supply: "My modesty was shocked last week until I had to use a walking stick for three days. I saw a woman with a bottle of stuff and I asked her if that was something to drink, and very frankly and un-sanctimoniously she said, 'No, this is not to drink, this is what women paint their legs with.' Well, I like to have fallen over and she proceeded to explain to me that she wore out a pair of hose each week but for a dime she could get enough paint to paint an old cow, and she thought that unless she got caught out in the rain, the paint would do just as well as the hose."

**ALL GAVE SOME
SOME GAVE ALL**

On The Home Front...(continued)

Moved to the front page for the April 30, 1943 Optic Herald edition, Gandy's column returns to the problem of food shortages and tells of certain unscrupulous persons skirting the wartime rationing of meat:

“Reports have traveled in here that the carcass of animals that have died of diseases are being sold for food in certain cities in Texas. A committee went out to investigate this condition, and one member swore to me that he saw them skinning an old mule that was so pore that they had to pump him up to skin it.”

Gandy apparently decides that, when push comes to shove in the buffet line, he'll give up the course of meat with his meal: “Since then I have been living on a vegetable diet and our meat rationing has come far between.”



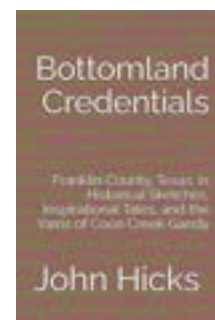
Along with notices regarding rationing, pictures like these appeared regularly at the time in local newspapers around the country. Here, scrap iron is collected on the Mt. Vernon square during the war; it would be hauled to steel plants and recycled for use in armament factories.

In his column dated May 7, 1943, Gandy writes of finding himself unhappy at the end of his first wartime stint in Austin. It's difficult to supply soldiers overseas without starving folks at home, to spend government funds without raising taxes, to regulate farms and businesses and laborers without causing strikes and rebellion. Maybe a new committee assignment would help, he thinks.

Then, for a moment, he slips away from all those worries and lapses into unexpected joy: “In spite of all that, I saw a man this morning, who had turned a deaf ear to all of it and was hunkered down on the sidewalk watching a doodlebug. Being a doodlebug fancier myself, I forgot it all and hunkered down with him and together we had a long and interesting discussion on doodlebugs. It so happened I knew more about doodlebugs than he did, and I was so delighted to find somebody that I was able to tell something, I really came unwound. The most of the people I meet here know more than I do and I have to sit and listen.”



Bottomland Credentials: Franklin County, Texas in Historical Sketches, Inspirational Tales, and the Yarns of Coon Creek Gandy can be purchased locally at Norman's Green House in Mt. Vernon, TX or online at Amazon: ISBN: 9798288139956



MYSTERY WEED

Rev. Dan Hoke

Poke Sallet is a weed. It's a flowery plant native to the South. It matures into a sturdy burgundy colored stem. It can grow up to six feet tall with red berries and white blooms. Maybe it was named for our 11th president, James Polk. Although, I wouldn't think it's any great honor for a weed to carry one's name. Elvis popularized the weed in a song entitled: "Polk Sallet Annie." "Polk," as it is called in the South, grows along creek banks and in fence rows. It is usually one of the first green plants to show in the early springtime. Rural folks got excited when Polk began to "show up." Winter had kept any greens from being available to eat. So, there was interest in finding the new growth. It was a popular find in the spring for rural north and east Texas folk.

The quilting ladies, in a country church where I was pastor, would galvanize into action at the announcement that "Polk was up." The group would stop every task. Several would rush out with pans to pick polk weed, while others prepared the kitchen for cooking. Their recipe was to mix the cooked polk weed with spinach. Yes, at their insistence, I ate a big helping every spring.

However, I wasn't necessarily what you could call a fan. Polk can be toxic even to the point of deadly. Consuming the roots, stems or berries can cause respiratory paralysis. A dish of cooked new leaves is likely to create severe intestinal distress. Even so, the ladies were busy fixing it for our lunch. What kept me on edge was how they were always, as in every time, expressing their assurance they knew just how to fix it, so it wouldn't kill us all.

Southern cooks know the weed can be toxic, even to the point of deadly. So, there were several important steps one had to take to make the weed safe to eat. There were no shortcuts. First, Southern folk learned to pick it "young" or as new growth. If it grew until the stem was a burgundy color, it was bitter to the taste. Pigs wouldn't eat it. Now it's hard for me to admit that I ate what pigs had the caution to avoid.

To compensate for that toxic risk, cooks must boil the plant and pour away that juice a minimum of three times before it's safe. Some recipes advise boiling the leaves 3 to 5 times to be sure. A one time or two-time boil doesn't make it safe, just a little less toxic. Boil it at least three times! It's a firm rule to survive.

"Polk," is a mystery weed to me. First, how did a weed, that wasn't all that tasty, ever make it to the family table? Can one get so desperate to eat something green, they will take the risk? Evidently! Another curiosity is, how was the safety of boiling it three times ever determined? After one boiling made the first person sick, where was the motivation to continue with it? What was the inducement to test again, then follow up a third time? It doesn't taste that good! In addition, after the first casualty, how did the family select a member to be the next test case? Maybe it was a wayward son or their least favorite uncle at the table. With imagination I wonder. What was that first mamma thinking...Well... we haven't had any fresh greens since October. I know that last batch almost killed our little Johnny. Maybe if I boil it one more time. It's for sure Johnny won't eat it. But we have two more stout boys. They'll try it.

For sure it's a mystery weed. And that perplexity grows knowing that Polk has a history as a folk medicine. It was used as an herbal treatment for various ailments such as rheumatism, arthritis and dysentery. Native Americans and settlers would take the roots and leaves, grind them into a powder. It helped as an anti-inflammatory for open wounds. Boiling the mature leaves, presumably 3 times, would become a spring tonic for renewal and vitality. Low dosage was recommended. Botanists have determined the natural presence of vitamin C, A, Iron and B complexes. With all the complications though, I'll reach for the store-bought vitamins.

An additional amazement is how the Polk weed unexpectedly had a presence in a Christian Church service. The reverend John Travis was a Methodist traveling preacher in the early 1800s. He established two circuits, one along the Missouri River. In 1808, he organized the first camp meeting west of the Mississippi river. The Methodist Bishop McKendree (sixth Bishop) helped organize, promote and arrange Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian preachers for the weeklong meeting. In the camp meeting, the bishop served the first Holy Communion in Missouri. He used corn bread and polk juice as the sacrament for bread and wine.¹ Leave it to a Methodist Bishop to turn polk juice into a sacrament. Although there were no fatalities, it was considered fortunate that a Methodist Bishop was there to consecrate that one risky element. "Yes indeed." Polk Sallet qualifies as a mystery weed.



Phytolacca Americana¹

¹Also known as American pokeweed, poke sallet, pokeberry, dragonberry, pigeonberry weed, and inkberry

THE JOY

Ray Loyd Johnson

This story is reprinted from "Reflective Rays: Mount Vernon In The 40's And 50's."

Kids today have no idea what a high we got by going to the movies back before there was any TV and other entertainment was limited. The *Joy Theatre* was located on the east side of the square. We called it the "picture show." In the 1940's and early 50's it was the focus of our weekly anticipation.

For one thing it was cheap—just 12 cents for kids under twelve and popcorn cost a nickel. Also, it was cool inside. Air conditioning was so rare. To spend two hours away from the summer heat was a treat by itself.

On Saturday, when most everyone in Franklin County came to town, this theater was crowded. (Actually it was JOY Theatre.) Saturday was "shoot-em-up" day. COWBOY shows! Listed here are the main stars seen at the *Joy Theatre* in the 40's and early 50's, each of whom made several movies annually: Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Hopalong Cassidy, Tim Holt, Lash Larue, Tex Ritter, Jimmy Wakely, Sunset Carson, Wild Bill Elliott, The Durango Kid, Johnny Mack Brown, Rocky Lane and Rex Allen. Some sang and some did not, but each had a following.

Every cowboy star had a great horse: Champion, Trigger, Topper, White Flash, Thunder and Koko. And a goofy sidekick who made the star look even better. They had colorful names like Frog, Fuzzy, Cannonball, and California. Roy Rogers' sidekick, Gabby Hayes, once said of Roy in a movie: "Why, he's a rootin-tootin, six-gun-shootin, ring-tailed buckaroo." Oh, yeah, there would be a *girl* in the movie, and sometimes she would be a cowgirl. But except for Dale Evans (Roy's girl) none had lasting success. Besides, boys watching the show couldn't see why a gal should be around to take away from the fearless things their hero was doing, like chasing bad guys on his steady steed or fighting and never losing his hat. We learned that his years of clean living always enabled him to prevail.

The *Joy Theatre* had four different movies each week (may have varied over the years). There were afternoon shows on Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday a serial was continued each week with the star left in peril at the end of each chapter. There was also a short comedy such as Little Rascals or The Three Stooges. Later, cartoons became popular. During the week, there were adventure, mystery and romance films. Mostly grown-ups stuff. But boys liked the cowboys. A lasting impression was made. Even today these old shows can be found on TV, usually late at night. Most people watching are probably aging guys who remember the good life at theaters like the *JOY*.

Mount Vernon has had a lot of places to remember through the years. But for so many of us, the *Joy Theatre* will always be near the top of the list.



Start Living Again. Go Out and See A New Movie At Your Theatre Tonight!

JOY

THEATRE - - PHONE 197
MT. VERNON, TEXAS

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Permit No. 26
MT. VERNON, TEXAS

BOXHOLDER
LOCAL --- RURAL

1958 **JANUARY** 1958

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

Don's Miss Our Gala Midnight New Years Eve Show, Tuesday, December 31
Sal Mineo James Whitmore, Carrol Nash
THE YOUNG DON'T CRY
Our Regular Admission

the 3 faces of Eve
CINEMASCOPE
Evel KESSEL - Susan WOODWARD - Lee I. CROW

FORTY GUNS
CINEMASCOPE
BARBARA STANWYCK
BARRY SULLIVAN

YOU WILL LIKE THIS ONE

A SUPER WESTERN

WARNERCOLOR
Yvonne DeCARLO
Clark GABLE
BAND OF ANGELS

HISTORY'S GREATEST MANKUNT!
THE MIDNIGHT STORY
CINEMASCOPE
TONY CURTIS - MARISA PAVAN
GILBERT ROLAND

REVENGE on the LOOSE!
JOE DAKOTA
COLOR
JOCK MACHONEY
LUANA PATTEN

PUT THIS ON YOUR MUST SEE LIST

LOTS OF SUSPENSE

ALSO LAWRENCE WELK SHORT

RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN Present
OKLAHOMA!
CINEMASCOPE
Color by TECHNICOLOR
The Picture that ran a year on Broadway!
GERTON MACRAE - GLORIA GRAHAME
SHIRLEY JONES - GENE NELSON

GREGORY PECK
LAUREN BACALL
DESIGNING WOMAN

Yan JOHNSON
Martin CAROL
Robert LOM
Action of the Tiger

THE MUSICAL YOU HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR

A BIG COMEDY

FULL OF ACTION & THRILLS

WILL SUCCESS SPOIL ROCK HUNTER?
CINEMASCOPE - COLOR by De Luxe
JAYNE MANSFIELD
TONY RANDALL
BETTY DRAKE
JOAN BLONDELL
A BLUE RIBBON WINNER

AVA GARDNER
STEWART GRANGER
DAVID NIVEN
THE LITTLE HUT

Stewart GRANGER
Rhonda FLEMING
GUN GLORY
CINEMASCOPE
METROCOLOR

PACKED WITH LAUGHS

DON'T MISS THIS BIG WESTERN

COLOR
The SUN ALSO RISES
CINEMASCOPE
FRANCIS FERRER
AVA GARDNER
MEL FERRER
MEL FERRER
IRVING FLYNN

THE HAPPY ROAD
GENE KELLY
BARBARA LADD

ELVIS PRESLEY AT HIS GREATEST!
IN HIS FIRST BIG DRAMATIC SCREEN ROLE!
Jailhouse Rock
7

YOU OWE IT TO YOURSELF TO SEE THIS PICTURE

ANOTHER BIG COMEDY

No Advance in Admission Prices

PAUL MACDONALD COMPANY, INC. - KERRVILLE, TEXAS

THE JOY THEATER

Bill Deneke

Rev. Deneke returns to share his memories of the Joy Theater, a favorite pastime of the young and young at heart.

When I was in the sixth grade, the teacher, Carlton Newsome, asked how many in the class had televisions. Only a few raised their hands. Of course, no one had either home computers or mobile phones. One thing we did have was a local theater and with it all the adventures the silver screen could provide. We had the Joy Theater.

The Joy was the third movie theater in Mt. Vernon. The first was the Franklin and the second was the Queen, located on Smokey Row. One of my early memories of the Joy Theater was going to the ticket box office when it was centered between the theater's front entrance and exit. That was in the early 50's before it was remodeled and the ticket window was moved to the side. During the remodeling, I remember scaffolding on the auditorium walls as large designs were painted on them. Later in the 50's, the screen was widened to accommodate Cinemascope.

Inside the Joy there was a small lobby with a concession stand where candy and popcorn were sold. Not until the 60's were sodas available. In the auditorium the seats under the balcony had upholstered backs and seats. The next group down had cushioned seats and curved wooden backs, while the seats nearest the screen had wooden seats and backs. Like most facilities of that period, black people and white people were separated with black people in the balcony.

The theater was open on Saturday and Sunday afternoons and every evening. Normally there were three different movies each week. Occasionally, there would be an additional late show on Saturdays. In time this became a practice every Saturday night and it really attracted young people. The square would be full of cars with teenagers waiting for the "midnight show" to begin.

The Joy had a small stage in front of the screen. I remember several stage shows although these were rare. (I also remember going to a stage show at the Martin in Mt. Pleasant where tomatoes were thrown at the entertainers. Mt. Vernon teens had better manners.)

At the Saturday matinees, serials were sometimes shown before the main feature. These were action packed stories carried over from week to week. They were often about some jungle adventure or about Flash Gordon's space adventures. Always there was a cartoon before the movie. Occasionally, the cartoon would be a sing-along, and the audience would sing with the film by following the bouncing ball above the lyrics. I always liked it whenever a short featured the Three Stooges or the Little Rascals.

Advertisements and previews of coming attractions preceded the cartoon. In the days leading to Christmas a long list of local merchants would be featured. I can still hum the tune that accompanied the rolling list.

The admission price in the 50's was twelve cents for children under twelve and twenty-five cents for those twelve and over. Bicycles could be parked in a reserved area in front of the theater. There was often a line of people waiting for the Joy to open on weekends. I remember going to see *Gone with the Wind* when I was in the third grade and finding the theater full. Fortunately, a friend had saved me a seat.

Another attraction the theater had was air-conditioning. In the 50's air-conditioning was less common than now, and on a hot Saturday or Sunday afternoon a cool theater was enticing.

The primary means of advertising for the Joy were "show calendars" which were distributed all over town. In the early and mid 50's the calendars featured two months of coming attractions. Later in the 50's that changed to monthly show calendars. There were posters in the theater's marquee as well. Also, the owners had a truck with high sideboards on which there were movie advertisements.

As television became more popular, week-night attendance at the Joy dropped. To encourage more attendance on Wednesday evenings, after the feature a drawing for a prize would take place. This was around the time when a drink machine was added to the lobby.

The neon lights of the Joy lit up the east side of the square and provided entertainment all through my school years. The last time I saw a movie there was in the 70's on a return visit to Mt. Vernon. The movie was *The Poseidon Adventure*. Wall curtains had replaced the artful paintings. Sadly, not long afterward, the theater was destroyed by fire.

GALT DIARY—LETTERS HOME

Dr. Jabez Galt

For several months now, we have reported on events during WWII through letters the young Dr. Jabez Galt sent to his parents during the 4-year course of the War. In our last quarterly journal, we published letters written during May 1945. Dr. Galt's unit has made it into northern Italy. He reaches the end of the month still thinking he will be sent to the Pacific Theatre. The letters take us to August when his ship's course is set for New York City. For now, step back to June 1944. We have two letters; both to his parents in Mt. Vernon. In the first, he reports to his parents that Rome has fallen. And in the second, a few days later, he closes with a first-hand account of his brother's promotion to the rank of Major in the United States Army Medical Corps. The brothers were both medical doctors; graduates of Mt. Vernon High School and served in the same unit the 56th Evacuation Hospital—somewhat equivalent to the MASH units of a later war.

May 2, 1945

To: Parents—Rome has fallen and the invasion is under way! Strangely though, there is but slight change in the attitude here – no shouting; no partying; no knocking ourselves out on false hopes. To us, it is just the beginning of another tedious heartbreaking go round.

Sidney and I are briefly separated – he ahead with the most forward of our troops. Maj. Rippy, Dr. Ben Merrick, Hugh Arnold, Hugh McClung, Mac Bowyer and I are a little behind with another section of the hospital. Edmund Cottrell with his unfulfilled ambition would thrill to be here. Sidney is.

Ben and I have been studying German this PM. However, it is a toss up as to which language will be indicated, for I know we won't rest for long, but which way will we go?

Miss Gene [sister] wrote me a letter that I can without qualification of any kind class as the best that I have ever received/ I value it so highly that I will forward it to you later. It's an analysis of the characters seen at Taxco during Easter [sister Gene is living in Mexico during most of the War years].

Also enclosed are two cartoons by Bill Mauldin. The one about [censored] is a great work of art. It's probable that his brand of cartooning falls flat to those who have never been in combat zones. Do not loose it under any circumstances.

All is well – we are in the best of health but ready to trade places with the boys in the general hospitals in the states.

Love, Jabez



War Mess Camp from the Galt Diaries

June 13, 1944, V-mail

To: Parents—It has been a fast go round lately. Sidney receiving his Majority is the biggest event.

I have visited Rome. Have seen a lot of the city even though in a hurry. Besides from the railroads, it is untouched. A lovely clean city with the people as in the states. St. Peter's Cathedral nearly a lifetime job to see even part of it. Experienced a strange emotion as I stood there in the Piazza de Venincia and looked at the balcony where Mussolini always spoke from. This included the speech that you and I listened to in Greenville as we once drove to Dallas.

The tributes paid Sidney by the enlisted men, as he was promoted, were beautiful. He was a little embarrassed by some just holding on to his hands and telling him over and over "Gee, Captain I meant Major that means so much to me or congratulations, but you always have been the best of any rank anyway." No medals for him but the more intangible honors he had are permanent.



Sidney Galt—Italy Tour

2026 CURRENT FCHA MEMBERS & SUPPORTERS

Thank you to everyone who has renewed their membership or joined our organization for the first time. Below is our current membership list as of the end of May 2026. If you sent in a contribution and do not find your name on the list, please call or email our office at **903-537-9300** || **fchaoffice@gmail.com** and we will update our records. We appreciate your continued support and are always striving to meet your expectations. Your contribution ensures that you continue receiving our publication in the mail and is a great way to support our operations. A membership form is on the last page. It is not too late to join in for 2026—please fill out and mail the form on the last page to:

FCHA, PO Box 289 Mt. Vernon, Texas 75457

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STORIES FROM GRAY ROCK

Ralph Banks

Continuing the publication of the Ralph Banks collection—STORIES FROM GRAY ROCK. Mt. Vernon native son Ralph Banks has given us his entire collection of short stories and essays regarding his family and childhood memories from Gray Rock, a community east of Mt. Vernon. We will publish the 71 chapters sequentially.

Chapter 7—When a Flying Jenny Came to West New Hope School

Airplanes were almost completely unknown to the general populace of northeast Texas before World War I. However, about the year 1922 small bi-wing airplanes could sometimes be seen flying over the area, including the community of West New Hope in northwest Titus County, Texas, that wowed and caused daydreams in the heads of the children attending the small public school there.

Many of the bi-wing or “biplanes” were of the “JN” series built by the Curtiss Aeroplane Company. These biplanes were commonly referred to as “Jennys”, such nickname being derived from the model designation “JN”, and were originally produced in large numbers as a training aircraft for the U.S. Army during World War I. The “Jenny” continued post-World War I as a civil aircraft with thousands of surplus Jennys being sold at bargain prices to private owners in the years after the War, and became central to the barnstorming era that helped awaken America to civil aviation through much of the 1920s. Therefore, the Flying Jennys and their counterparts largely became the backbone of American postwar civil aviation.

And, many of these planes in civilian life after the War were no doubt being flown by discharged World War I pilots who preferred to prolong their youthful adventures of flying during the War in frequent “barnstorming forays” instead of settling down to less-active and more calm civilian pursuits. Although there undoubtedly were other brands of biplanes flying during the 1920’s, it was common for all to be referred to by the general populace as “Flying Jennys”. Thus, one afternoon after one of the biplanes had passed over the schoolhouse and community earlier in the day, the main discussion of the Gladys and Buss Banks children, Robert, Clio, Flave, Damon, Harvey and Roger, and little sister Gladys, along with other schoolchildren of the community, was just that event as the children left school for the day. “Wish I could take a ride in one of them Flying Jennys”, said one of the children. To this the oldest of the Banks children, Robert, retorted, “You can; maybe it would not be an airplane, but me and my brothers can build you a flying jenny in about three hours, right on the school ground which can give you a ride like flying”. The “flying jenny” that Robert was referring to had been heard of by him from some still-older boys. The main element of this Jenny was a ten or so foot long, heavy plank or pole with a hole through its cross-section at the halfway point of its length. In this hole was a loosely placed wooden or metal peg, which in-turn was inserted and driven into another vertical “pilot” hole augured into a tree-stump or some other wooden base. In operation a child would sit astride either end of the Jenny plank or pole, and the element was then rotated horizontally about the pin and stump or base by two other children. The device, literally a crude “merry-go-round”, was then usually one of enjoyment for schoolchildren in such early-day rural areas who were otherwise afforded few, if any, such amusement devices anyway.

So, the next morning before “first-bell” at the school some of the older schoolboys could be seen lugging onto the school ground a long bridge plank and a heavy metal spike, which had been discarded in the area. Others brought from home, tools for the construction job ahead; including a saw, a couple of hand axes and a wood auger. Still another of the younger boys was carrying a small tin of axle-grease to lubricate the pivot pin for rotation of the Jenny plank. Then, at the morning recess, activity was centered around a foot or so in diameter round, by two or three foot-high stump of an old tree on the school ground, that had been struck by lightening in a storm previously. Some of the boys then set to work auguring the requisite hole in the Jenny plank, while others were sawing off the top of the stump and dressing it, and auguring a pilot-hole for anchoring the metal pivot-pin.

The work on the flying jenny continued during the day’s recesses, with final assembly planned for the next morning’s recess. And, the device was ready for operation the next school day with all of the schoolchildren crowding around and eager for their turn.

So, “two by two” the schoolchildren started their rides on the “Flying Jenny” with the two previous riders taking a turn in pushing in a circle the Jenny plank. But, after only a few rides there was obviously a “downside” to the fun of riding the Jenny. The riders would often get dizzy and even become sick. So, with completion of one cycle of rides for all the school children, ending with two of the older girls sickly wobbling away from the ride, the Head Teacher of the School stepped forward. The Teacher then sternly instructed the older boys to completely dismantle the homemade carousel and return the plank and metal spike to where they were first obtained, and to saw the stump down to the ground line and chop it up for firewood. And, so ended flights of a “Flying Jenny” at West New Hope School.

Pictured right:

West New Hope School, c. 1920

Titus County just east of the Franklin County line, and as you may realize Gray Rock was also almost on the line between Franklin and Titus Counties.

- **2nd row on left: Lorene Thomas (Owens)**
- **2nd row standing on right: J.T. Thomas**
- **Seated on right: Ella Mae Thomas Reddin, sister to Lorene Thomas**

Credit: Lorene Thomas Owens



ADDITIONS TO OUR ARCHIVES

B.F. Hicks

My dad loved crockery, fruit jars, and antique soda pop bottles. I don't know why. One of those things I might have asked. My mom certainly loved antiques. But she didn't take pleasure in chancing on a "Drey" – an antique blue jar – looking about like an 1858 Ball Mason but instead bearing the imprinted logo – "Drey." And crockery: my gosh. Churns – a dozen or more and another 20 or more jugs. And boxes of the canning jars – some are crockery jars which will date to colonial America. After packing sausage or another product in the jars, you poured more hot grease to totally immerse the product. Then you would use paraffin or even clean straw over the top. My mother made jelly occasionally and used the same method to seal jars of jelly. But at least by 1858, Americans had commenced the use of canning jars made of glass. We've all seen the glass pint and quart jars made with wire clamps that held a wire glass lid in place. A rubber seal was carefully placed on top of the lower jar and the lid fitted and clamped down. In short order, zinc lids were prepared which could be screwed onto a fitted jar. Usually, the lids had a rubber liner which when fitted securely between the jar and the screwed on lid, could "seal" the canned product. I don't guess the rubber lids could be used twice. Then we get to the jars to accommodate the screw-on lid. And the invention of "seal sealing" lids which had a paraffin seal embedded ring which – when fitted against the jar and then screwed on tight would seal. We won't go into water baths. We will merely point out that our association has a variety of these jars; probably all used at some point during my father's 86 year span of life. I've given the crockery and the jars. And now I've given his real prize: his collection of soda bottles for sodas made right here in Mt. Vernon, Texas.



He prized them and would pull them out for display to visitors. I've done the same, but new visitors to my home are few and far between and we all face the reality of age. Rather than someone wondering why I have had four or five bottles alongside the crystal in a china cabinet after my death, I may as well pass this on to the historical association.

Over the years I've seen maybe a half dozen as various friends or clients brought them by to show me. I hope that more of these will surface and can be added to our collections. These are truly evidence of life before corporate multi-national firms took over so much of our food and beverage production. Right here in Mt. Vernon.

WARRIOR SPIRIT PROJECT—HONOR PROGRAM

David and Charla Truesdale Warrior Spirit Project organize a monthly tribute for veterans in the Mt. Vernon/Franklin County area—called “Honor the Flag.” It is a very moving ceremony and only lasts about 20 minutes on the Square. We strongly encourage you to attend! For more information, you can visit their website at warriorspiritproject.org. In this edition, we are featuring Bobby Ray Martin.

Bobby Ray Martin—BM3, US Navy (tribute by granddaughter, Desirae Phillips)

Bobby Ray Martin was born on February 2, 1935, in Greggton, Texas. He joined the United States Army in March of 1958 and served with the 1st Battle Group, 3rd Infantry Regiment, stationed at Fort Myer in Arlington, Virginia. During his service, he earned the rank of Specialist Fourth Class, E-4, and was hand selected for one of the most prestigious and demanding assignments in the U.S. Army: Honor Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, serving from August 1958 to March 1960.

Becoming a Tomb Sentinel requires a Soldier to meet extraordinary physical, mental, and ethical standards. Sentinels must maintain a flawless record, be in exceptional physical condition, meet strict appearance requirements (for example you must be between 5’10” and 6’4”), and endure months of rigorous training. They memorize the history of Arlington National Cemetery, master precise ceremonial movements, and pass demanding examinations with near-perfect accuracy. Uniform inspections are measured down to the sixty-fourth of an inch, and with a 90% failure rate, only a select few earn this honor—making the Tomb Guard Identification Badge the second rarest distinction in the U.S. Army. In many ways, my grandfather was perfectly suited for this role. He was meticulous, thrived on order, and believed deeply in doing things the right way...ALWAYS.

Rules mattered to him. In fact, growing up, if you ate before swimming, you waited *exactly* 30 minutes—to the second. That same discipline, precision, and respect for standards is what made him an exceptional Sentinel. Even though my grandfather possessed the discipline, character, and physical demands of this duty, he was bowlegged. The precise, rigid marching style and perfect posture required meant that any noticeable physical imperfection, like bow legs, would most likely disqualify a soldier from this elite duty. However, he became the first bow-legged Soldier to guard the Tomb, often walking at night when there were less visitors. Twenty-one steps. Turn. Stand at attention for 21 seconds. Turn. Repeat...through pouring rain, blizzard like snow or scorching heat. The soldier continues his solitary walk. He carried out this sacred duty with humility and pride, ensuring that those who gave their lives for our country were never forgotten and never left alone. To him, guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was not just an assignment—it was one of the greatest honors of his life.



Bobby Ray Martin



Bobby and Sharon Martin with daughters, Mesha Rutledge – left - and Marla White – right.



First wedding held in the Mt. Olive Baptist Church; April 5, 1962

Wedding Photo: L to R: Gail Bise, Teresa Gilbert, Wanda Swinford Carla Ottinger, Kathy Edge, Sharon Godfrey (bride), Bobby Martin (groom), Sandra Bounds, Jackie Martin, Fred Aikin, Dale Weisinger, Edson Reynolds (minister)

TEXAS HISTORICAL GROUPS

We have an abundance of resources available to glean Texas history from. Here are a few groups worth checking out. You will find online articles and more.

WEST TEXAS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

A focus on West Texas History
West Texas Historical Review journal, *The Cyclone* newsletter, awards, fellowships & grants, in cooperation with other historical groups.

<https://wtha.wildapricot.org>



THE TEXAS CENTER AT SCHREINER UNIVERSITY

Dialog-friendly atmosphere for newcomers to Texas. The goal is to be a vital Texas History content provider to teachers, parents, students, and citizens across the State of Texas: supporting cultural preservation, educating about Texas' Rich Heritage, showcasing Texas' global impact

<https://thetexascenter.org>



EAST TEXAS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

A focus on East Texas History
Conferences, symposiums, awards & scholarships
Back issues of sixty years of the *East Texas Historical Journal* are also digitally available through the website.

<https://www.easttexashistorical.org>



SUSAN & DON'S FAVORITE BAKED EGGS RECIPE

After twenty years since the Don Meredith Exhibit opened at our museum, we still see a steady flow of visitors come in to relish the treasures and memories of the first Dallas Cowboy—sportscaster—actor—artist—general good guy. With so many talents and charisma, Don won the hearts of countless fans; his fame reverberates across Texas, and his legacy lives on. We share Susan and Don's favorite baked eggs recipe below:

- 4 scallions, sliced*
- 2 cloves garlic, minced*
- 1/2 green bell pepper, chopped*
- 2 (10 ounce) packages frozen chopped spinach, thawed*
- 1/2 cup half and half*
- salt and black pepper*
- 12 eggs*
- 2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Mozzarella cheese*
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil*
- 1 (14 1/2 ounce) can crushed tomatoes*
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper*
- 1/2 cup hot salsa (optional)*

Combine scallions, garlic, bell pepper and spinach in large skillet. Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until fresh vegetables are tender. Stir half and half into vegetables. Season with salt and black pepper. Spoon spinach mixture into 13x9x2-inch baking dish. Break eggs, 1 at a time, into cup (without breaking yolks). Carefully pour each on spinach mixture. Sprinkle cheese on eggs. Combine oil, tomatoes, salt, black pepper, cayenne pepper and salsa in saucepan. Warm thoroughly. Pour sauce over cheese layer. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes or until eggs are set. Serve hot with sausage or bacon. Serves 6 to 8.



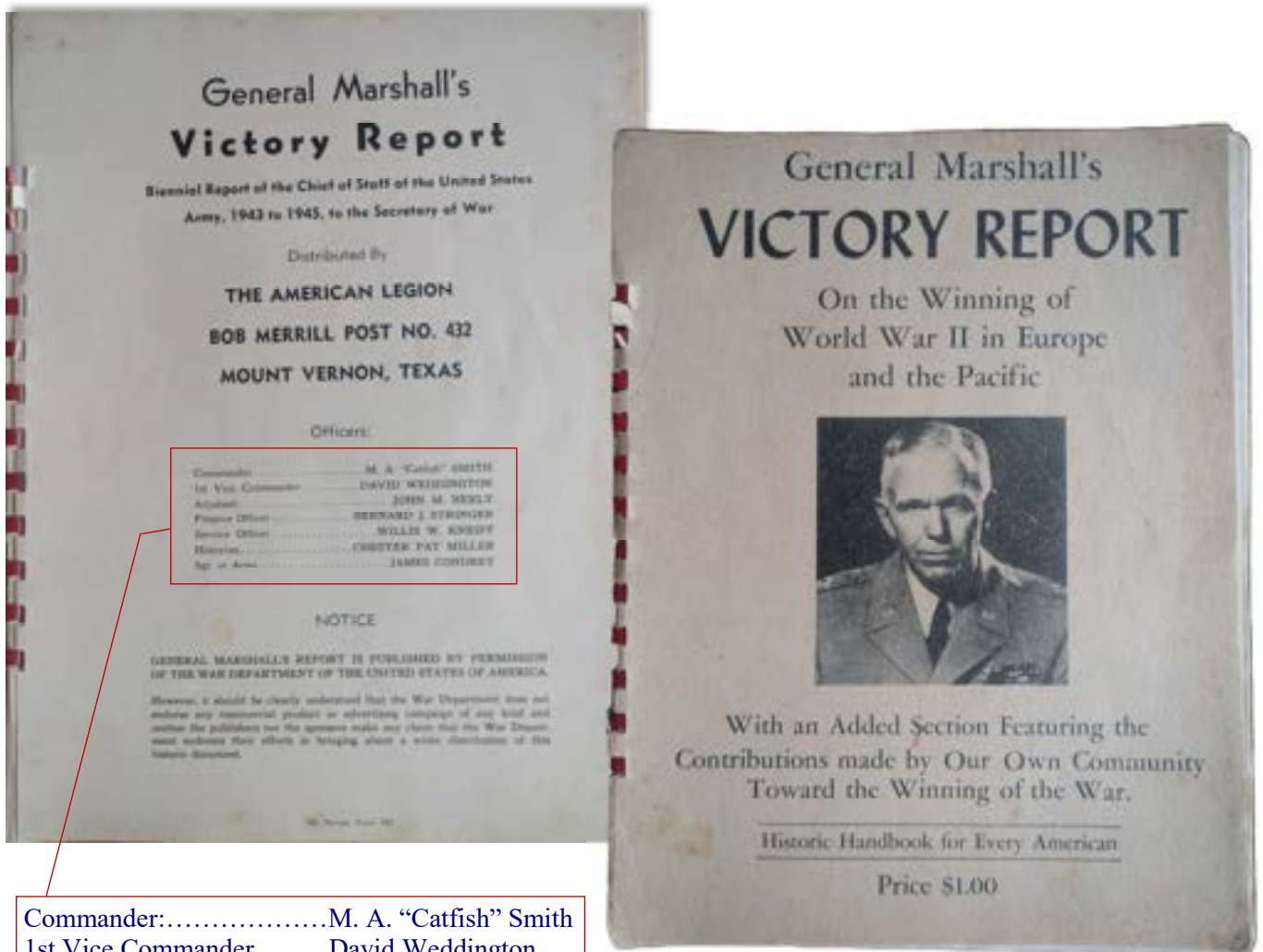
From the Sinatra Celebrity Cookbook

OUR COMMUNITY IN SERVICE

In our archives we chanced on a letter prepared by the American Legion listing Franklin County natives who had served during World War II. We reprint the letter and the list in its entirety and unchanged. Note that over 900 sons and daughters of Franklin County served – out of a population of 8,373. The introductory letter also speaks of eight War Bond Drives – with our citizens oversubscribing by several thousand dollars in each of the drives.

We actually think that a few more Franklin County natives may have been overlooked in preparation of the list. For instance, Dr. Sidney Galt, native of Mt. Vernon, served in the Army Medical Corps for the full term of the war. He is not listed; must have been enrolled through Dallas where he was living when the War commenced. If you do not find your family members listed, please let us know, and we will add them to our archives. Franklin County, Texas deserves national recognition for the level of service.

The following pages are from *GENERAL MARSHALL'S VICTORY REPORT*, featuring Franklin County contributions toward winning the War.



Commander:.....M. A. "Catfish" Smith
1st Vice Commander.....David Weddington
Adjutant.....John M. Neely
Finance Officer.....Bernard J. Stringer
Service Officer.....Willis K. Kneiff
Historian.....Chester Pat Miller
Sgt. At Arms.....James Condrey

The American Legion report from this book and list of Franklin County names will be on display at our military exhibit "Franklin County Serves".

FRANKLIN COUNTY, TEXAS

FRANKLIN COUNTY, NAMED AFTER B. C. FRANKLIN, WAS OFFICIALLY CREATED IN 1875 FROM TITUS COUNTY, AND SINCE ITS ORIGIN HAS BECOME A LEADER AMONG THE COUNTIES OF EAST TEXAS IN CIVIC DEVELOPMENT.

IN PEACE TIMES FRANKLIN COUNTY HAD ESTABLISHED LEADERSHIP IN ACTIVITIES FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE NATION, STATE, AND COUNTY AND WHEN THE JAPS PERPETRATED THEIR SNEAK ATTACK AT PEARL HARBOR ON DECEMBER 7, 1941, FRANKLIN COUNTY WAS READY TO MEET THE OCCASION.

ALTHOUGH ONE OF THE SMALLEST COUNTIES IN TEXAS, WITH ONLY 289 SQUARE MILES AND 8,378 POPULATION, FRANKLIN COUNTY SET A RECORD THAT MANY LARGER COUNTIES FAILED TO MEET. SHE GAVE OVER 900 SONS AND DAUGHTERS TO THE ARMED FORCES, AND WITH THE ABLE LEADERSHIP OF L. D. LOWRY, JR., COUNTY CHAIRMAN; DAVE BOLGER, ASSISTANT COUNTY CHAIRMAN; M. L. EDWARDS, JR., CITY CHAIRMAN; AND THEIR ASSISTANTS, OVER-SUBSCRIBED EIGHT WAR BOND DRIVES EACH BY SEVERAL THOUSAND DOLLARS. THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF THESE MEN AND OTHER CITIZENS, FRANKLIN COUNTY BACKED HER SONS AND DAUGHTERS TO THE LAST EFFORT.

AS LEGIONNAIRES WE ARE PROUD OF FRANKLIN COUNTY, PROUD TO LIVE WHERE TRUE AMERICANISM EXISTS--PROUD THAT IN PEACE OR WAR OUR COUNTY IS IN THE LEAD AND NOT AT THE HALF-WAY MARK---HER CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, AND TOWNS AND HER PAST RECORD UNSURPASSED BY SISTER COUNTIES.

OUR PRAYERS TO OUR GREAT ONE GENERAL IN HEAVEN ARE FOR YOUR GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION, FRANKLIN COUNTY, IN ALL YOUR FUTURE TASKS, AND WITH THIS ASSURANCE WE KNOW THAT FRANKLIN COUNTY WILL ALWAYS BE LISTED, "OVER THE TOP."

WE PAY TRIBUTE

MT. VERNON IS PROUD TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE MANY MEN AND WOMEN FROM MT. VERNON, TEXAS WHO HELPED WIN OUR GREAT VICTORY IN WORLD WAR II ALL OVER THE WORLD,--IN THE ARMY, THE NAVY, THE MARINES, THE AIR FORCES AND IN EVERY BRANCH OF OUR ARMED FORCES.

ADAMS, BARNEY D.
ADAMS, CALVIN D.
ADAMS, DELVIN H.
ADAMS, GLEN
ADAMS, LESTER T.
AGEE, DAN H.
AIKIN, ERNEST F.
ALEXANDER, WILLIAM J.
ALSOBROOK, JEWEL
ANDERS, CHARLES
ANDERS, WOODROW
ANDERSON, EARL Y.
ANDERSON, LONDON E.
ARMSTRONG, JAMES L.
ARMSTRONG, REX
ARTHUR, JESSE
ASHMORE, CHARLES
ASHMORE, SHERMAN
ATTESON, LARRY W.
AYERS, ELTON T.
AYERS, OTIS L.
AYERS, RAY
AYERS, WILLIAM P.

BALL, EVERETT E.
BANISTER, JOE W.
BANISTER, JOHN A.
BANKHEAD, ALFRED A.
BANKS, CHARLES T.
BANKS, FINES
BANKS, HARRY L.
BANKS, HERBERT
BANKS, HOWARD E.
BANKS, RAYMOND C.
BANKS, WM. S. NOBLE
BANKSTON, HAROLD
BARBER, JIMMY R.
BARKER, ALFRED L.
BARKER, REX
BARKER, LOYD
BARKER, TWYMAN O.
BARKER, THOMAS W.
BARRETT, PAUL J.
BARNETT, HARRY P.
BARRON, MORRIS
BARTLEY, ROBBIE M.
BASS, JACK T.
BASS, JOSEPH C.
BASS, ROY J.
BAUGH, BILLY R.
BAUGH, JOHN M.
BEALL, H. W. JR.
BEALL, WILLIAM
BENNETT, LOUIS S.
BENNETT, SMITH
BENTON, JONNIE L.
BIFFEL, ALBERT W.
BIRDSONG, EUGENE
BIRDSONG, JAMES
BLACK, DEWEIL R.

BLACK, DON F.
BLACK, DUARD L.
BLACK, IRA E.
BLACK, JAMES B.
BLACK, ORAN L.
BLACK, SIDNEY L.
BLACKBURN, ROBERT J.
BLACKBURN, TROY L.
BLACKBURN, WALLACE R.
BLANCHETT, R. V.
BLANCHETT, WILLIE W.
BOLES, HARRISON L.
BOLES, JOE R.
BOLGER, JOSEPH W.
BOLGER, RUBEN F.
BOLIN, ANDREW J.
BOLIN, ARTHUR M.
BOLIN, BERNIE D.
BOLIN, DEWEY
BOLIN, G. W.
BOLIN, JOE
BOLIN, J. T.
BOLIN, THURMAN
BOLIN, THOMAS M.
BOLIN, VELVIN
BOOTH, ALBERT T.
BORDEN, JAMES O.
BOSWELL, DARIUS
BOSWELL, THURMAN F.
BOSWELL, ARGLE
BOYD, JOHN P. JR.
BREWER, GUY
BREWER, MARION W.
BREWER, ROY L.
BREWER, WARREN W.
BROACH, C. B.
BROOKS, ERSKIN
BROOKS, MARTIN
BROOKS, RUSSELL
BROOKS, SAMNICE
BROWN, AARON V.
BROWN, ALTON L.
BROWN, EDWARD R.
BROWN, ELDON E.
BROWN, CHARLES R.
BROWN, DAVID J.
BROWN, HUBERT L.
BROWN, JAMES D.
BROWN, JOE B.
BROWN, L. C.
BROWN, MELVIN
BROWNING, JOHNNIE E.
BROWNING, WILLIAM J.
BRUCE, CHARLES T.
BRYAN, JIMMIE D.
BRYAN, WILLARD A.
BRYANT, HIRAM R.
BRYANT, PAUL
BUCK, JAMES M.
BUCK, WILLIAM H.
BULLARD, CARL B.
BULLARD, IRVIN L.
BURGIN, JOE D.

BURGIN, JOHN K.
BURKHAM, FERN W.
BURKS, GRIFFIE L.
BURNS, BILLIE M.
BURNS, CLENCE L.
BURNS, SELDON K.
BURTON, R. W.
BUSBEE, THADIS T.
BUTLER, RAYMOND D.

CAIN, ARTHUR H.
CAMPBELL, BRICE C.
CAMPBELL, DANIEL JR.
CAMPBELL, JOHN W.
CAMPBELL, MILTON T.
CAMPBELL, PHIL C.
CAMPBELL, PRESTON
CAMPBELL, BOBBY K.
CAMPBELL, ZACK G.
CANADAY, CLAUD
CANADAY, DYLE
CANADAY, ELIEN
CAPPS, CATHOL L.
CARGILE, DAN M.
CARRELL, HARVEY W.
CARRELL, JOSEPH T.
CARRELL, PETE
CARRELL, WILLIAM A.
CARGILE, JAMES H.
CARPENTER, GUY E.
CARRINGTON, BERNICE
CARRINGTON, JACK E.
CARSON, JAMES E.
CARSON, LAWRENCE E.
CARTER, JAMES R.
CATES, BUNICE C.
CASK, MARVIN W.
CATES, CHARLIE N.
CATES, D. B.
CATES, HORACE
CATES, R. B.
CAUDLE, RAYVILLE
CAVINESS, RAYMOND R.
CECIL, HENRY C.
CHAMBLEE, VICTOR R.
CHAMPION, CARL F.
CHANDLER, LEON
CHESHIRE, ENNIS E.
CHITSEY, JOHN A.
CHITSEY, HENRY E.
CHITWOOD, ELLIS E.
CHITWOOD, ZEYLON C.
CHOATE, GEORGE A.
CHOATE, JOHN B.
CLARK, RUFUS S.
CLAY, JAMES H.
CLAY, HOLLEY
CLAYTON, ALFRED G.
CLEVENGER, ERNEST R.
CLINTON, JOY

CLINTON, SAM
 COATES, CHARLES J.
 COCKRELL, A. M. JR.
 COCKRELL, AUBREY E.
 COE, LOIS
 COLLEY, SAM
 COLLINS, JOHNNIE L.
 COLLINS, BILLY L.
 COLLINS, MARSHALL B.
 COLLINS, MASTON E.
 COLLINS, REX M.
 COLLINS, J. T.
 COLLINS, SHELTON
 COMBS, MAVIS F.
 COMER, FLOYD N.
 CONDREY, JAMES H.
 CONNELLY, DOUGLAS D.
 CONNELLY, H. BURTON
 CONNELLY, JOE M. JR.
 CONNELLY, JAMES H.
 COOK, JILLIS M.
 COOPER, ALTON E.
 COOPER, LEONARD L.
 COTTON, LEONARD L.
 COUNTRYMAN, ROBERT L.
 COUNTRYMAN, WILLICE
 COWSER, B. EVAN
 COX, DURWIN
 COX, JEANE
 COX, GUY H.
 COX, LEON
 COX, RUFUS J. J.
 COX, ROBERT E.
 COX, WOODROW W.
 CRABTREE, LLOYD E.
 CRADDOCK, LOYD D.
 CRADDOCK, ALBERT
 CRADDOCK, DONALD O.
 CRAFTS, JOHN L.
 CRAIN, MILFRED
 CRAWLEY, ELLIS S.
 CRAWLEY, GEORGE W.
 CRAYTON, PAUL R.
 CRENSHAW, CHARLES
 CRENSHAW, JAMES
 CROW, CHARLES E.
 CROWSTON, ALTON R. D.
 CROWSTON, CLARENCE W.
 CROWSTON, ROY E.
 CUNNINGHAM, T. J.

DARNELL, HOMER G.
 DAUGHTRY, BERNICE
 DAVENPORT, HERMAN E.
 DAVENPORT, THOMAS R.
 DAVID, PHIL
 DAVIDSON, ARTIS
 DAVIDSON, ARNOLD J.
 DAVIS, BILLY R.
 DAVIS, JAMES E.
 DAVIS, JAMES M.
 DAVIS, HAROLD
 DAVIS, SAM
 DAVIS, CHARLES L.
 DAVIS, EARNEST F.
 DAVIS, JAMES A.
 DAVIS, THOMAS J.
 DAVLIN, HAROLD E.

DAWSON, ALVIN
 DAWSON, BILLIE T.
 DENSON, ESTELL
 DESHAZO, AVON
 DESHAZO, DON
 DEVALL, HARVEY
 DIGGS, BEN
 DILLON, GRADY E.
 DONALDSON, SAMMIE D.
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WILLIAMS, LONNIE
WILLIAMS, MAX C.
WILLIAMS, YOREE

IN MEMORIAM

*WE HONOR THE MEMORY OF THOSE MEN OF FRANKLIN COUNTY WHO
MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR
COUNTRY.*

BANKS, TRAVIS EUGENE

BARNETT, VIRBON T.

DRUMMOND, JAMES M.

THOMPSON, CLAUDE

EXELL, JIM N.

MAHAFFEY, C. W.

SMITH, FRED

WOOLBRIGHT, WILBURN

REAVES, GLEN

BERRY, GUY

FINDLEY, LEWIS R.

TEAGUE, LONNIE A.

COLORED

MASHACK, HARDIE

MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS

January—May 2026

IN MEMORY OF

J. Kenneth Bolin
Sue Bolin

Nancy Coleman
Lawrence Coleman

RM & Betty Harper
Mike & Sharon Harper

Bill & Blanche Hightower
Don & Elva Hightower Jumper

Tim Hyman
Brad & Stephanie Hyman

Jerry Jumper
Don & Elva Hightower Jumper

Sam & Lois Jumper
Don & Elva Hightower Jumper

Betty Lightfoot
Harold Lightfoot

Miss Dorothy Long
George & Reba Lunsford

Skip McGrady
David W. Wims

Frances Seay Coe Richardson
Joe & Janet Coe

Robert Nause
Anonymous

James Harvey Tatum
B.F. Hicks

Maddox Cool
B.F. Hicks

JoAnn Bowden Hughes
B.F. Hicks

John Bradberry
B.F. Hicks

David Felton Williams
B.F. Hicks

Rex Tillery
B.F. Hicks

Ila Fay Patrick
Jerry & Elease Hubbell

Don Easterling
Alicia Daberkow

IN HONOR OF

B.F. Hicks
George & Reba Lunsford

Gary & Kathy Boren
B.F. Hicks

B.F. Hicks
Dave & Cindy Crawford

Penn & Brooks families
Dorothy Lynn Brooks

B.F. Hicks
Nancy Bolduc

B.F. Hicks
Mary Lou Russell

David Crawford
B.F. Hicks

Elizabeth Borders
B.F. Hicks

Caleb Hicks
B.F. Hicks

Ken Greer
B.F. Hicks

Karla Haynes
B.F. Hicks

FROM OUR READERS

Our member James A. Moyers sent us a newspaper article regarding Dale Sinclair—Class of 1971, Mount Vernon High School graduate. The following is a snippet from the story featured in the February 2026 issue of People Newspapers—a D Magazine Partner affiliate. The full article can be found at www.parkcitiespeople.com.

James Moyers writes in:

*February 25, 2026
Franklin County Historical Association*

FYI regarding Mount Vernon Native Dale Sinclair, Village barbershop in Big D was a bit of Americana.

*Regards,
James A. Moyers, CPA
Sole Surviving Bachelor,
Winnsboro H.S. Class of 1967*

Old School Barbershop Makes Way For New Development

For 90 years, the Village Barbershop delivered old school cuts, free of any fancy frills but with lots of friendly conversation, to customers in Highland Park Village.

Owner Dale Sinclair jokingly referred to the 40-year-old chairs where customers sat for their cuts as '85 models and remarked that his barbershop was the only place in the town of Highland Park that still had two landlines.

Customers could pay with cash or a check. No payment apps or credit cards were accepted, and clients couldn't expect "coloring, or any real cosmetology stuff," Sinclair said.

He estimated that he'd given hundreds of thousands of cuts in his 53 years working as a barber in the Park Cities. He'd spent 45 of those in Highland Park Village, where he gave his first haircuts at the Village Barbershop in January 1981.

Sinclair gave his final haircuts on December 31, 2025.

Sinclair, who began cutting hair as soon as he graduated from barber school at 19, is now 73 and said in December that he would retire when his shop closed. The people, he said, had been his favorite part of cutting hair. He kept many of their photos on a shelf next to the John Wayne lunchbox he used to carry a turkey sandwich to work each day.

Lance Edwards, who's been coming to the Village Barbershop for 36 years, arrived with his son, Michael. Sinclair gave Michael his first haircut 28 years ago. The father and son took a photo on the way out, and Michael asked for one more of the Starburst candies that Sinclair used to give him when he was a child.



Above: Dale Sinclair (center) with Lance Edwards (left) and Michael Edwards (right).

Credits: Sarah Hodges and Dale Sinclair



Bottom: Sinclair gives a satisfied Charlie Palma a first look at his new cut.



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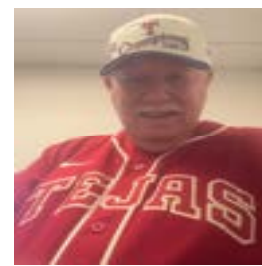
Anne Evetts



B.F. Hicks



David Aikin



James A. Moyers



Jim & Jane Funke



Matt White



Gail Reed

*Thank
You*



DEAR READER

- (1) If you have enjoyed an article in this edition of ECHOES, we want to hear from you! Please share your thoughts and experiences reading through this publication.
- (2) Do you have historical stories you would like to share with our readers?
- (3) Is there a topic you would like us to consider for future events and programs?

If you answered YES
to any of the above,
please write to us:

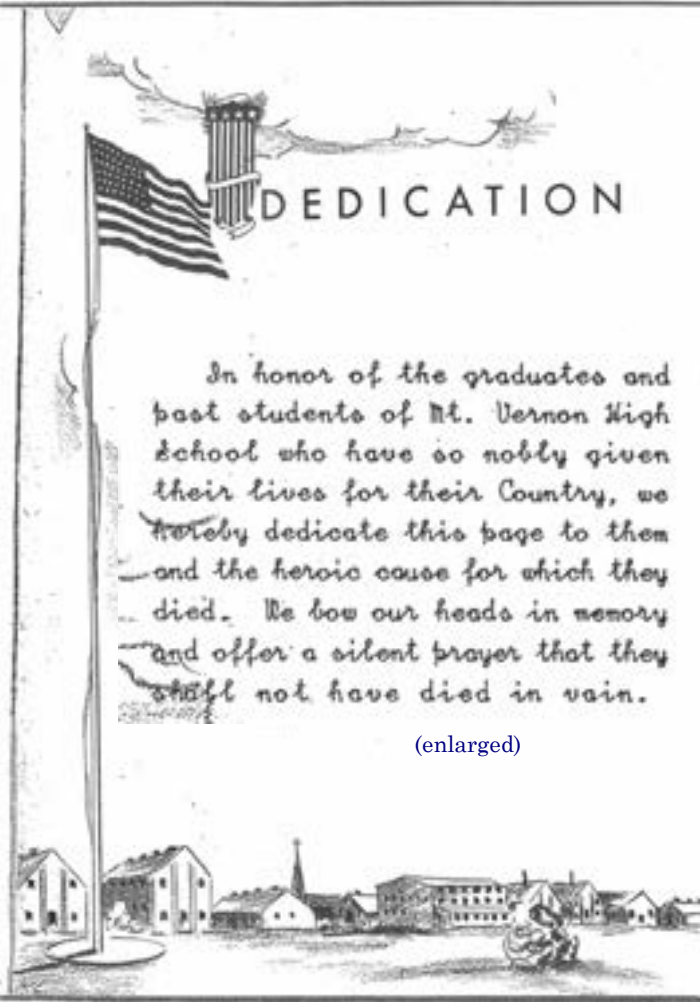
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Mt. Vernon, TX 75457





**TRIBUTE FROM MOUNT VERNON TIGERS
CLASS OF 1945 YEARBOOK**



(enlarged)

**TREASURES IN TIME
Making History**

Nothing can replace the nostalgia of our long-time running paper, the Mt. Vernon Optic-Herald, but we are excited to have our new community news outlet—Mount Vernon Now. As “MVNow” nears its three-month anniversary, many readers enjoy the weekly publication without seeing the extensive work involved in producing each story. MVNow is produced by its executive director Luiz Sifentes, and receives its content from *citizen journalists*. Anyone who loves to write and has a good story is encouraged to participate. All articles, whether submitted or written internally, are carefully reviewed before publication. Every Sunday at 7 a.m., subscribers to The MVNow Thread receive local stories, community updates, and features about Mount Vernon and Franklin County. MVNow is free to read, without advertisements or political content. The focus is on community events, local stories, historical connections, student achievements, volunteer efforts, and positive developments in Franklin County. The goal is simple: provide stories that inform, inspire, and strengthen community connection. MVNow continues to grow and evolve each week. Every article reflects a dedicated effort to represent the people, stories, and spirit of Mount Vernon and Franklin County.



Luiz Sifentes



Visit MVNOW!

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Visit our webpage for upcoming events.
www.fchatx.com/calendar



Did you know we have a **YouTube** Channel?

Our handle is @fchatx (or simply search **fchatx**).

We currently offer four videos highlighting the Fire Station Museum, Dupree Park, our cane syrup site, and an introduction to a new series called ‘Heritage in Focus.’

More to come!

Be sure to visit our channel, enjoy the videos, ‘Like’, ‘Subscribe’, and leave us your comments.



2026 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
Franklin County Historical Association
P. O. Box 289
Mount Vernon, TX 75457
903-537-9300

Memberships are based on the calendar year.
Members joining mid-year will receive all publications for that year.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Class of Membership & Dues:

Individuals & Family—\$25.00

Patron—\$50.00

Sponsor—\$100.00

Indicate your membership class and mail your dues check to:
FCHA, P.O. Box 289, Mt. Vernon, TX 75457

2026 DUES

Please fill in the above contact information. Circle membership class.

Dues for 2026 (Includes subscription to quarterly newsletter) \$ _____

Special tax deductible contribution for operations and maintenance: \$ _____

Special contributions may be designated as memorials or honorariums. Please list the name of the person memorialized or honored, and the name and address of the receipt for notice of your donation:

In Memory/In Honor of: _____

Notice to:

Total Enclosed: \$ _____



We need volunteers! Could you work an occasional four-hour shift at one of our museums or a few hours in the office?

_____ Yes, call me to schedule. Phone # _____

Scan and follow the QR to code to link to our Facebook page, website, and new YouTube channel!

Memberships can also be renewed on the website. Simply follow the link "Become A Member" and fill out a membership form, select your membership level, or make an honorarium or memorial donation.

We appreciate your ongoing support and could not do the work of preserving Franklin County history without our membership base!