Early History of Texas

Early History of Williamson County

The Webster Massacre

Williamson County Court House Sketches

Sketches of Early Days in Taylor

J. H. GRIFFITH

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INTRODUCTORY

Early History of Texas

In 1685 LaSalle located a colony in Texas in the name of the King of France. The colony was located on the Garcitas river a few miles above where it empties into Matagorda bay. This is supposed to be the first attempt at permanent European settlement in Texas Mexico at that time was subject to Spain, whose territorial claims included the present state of Texas.

In the 18th century the Spanish built several missions in Texas as part of their plan to colonize the territory, but little headway was made until 1821 when Moses Austin secured from the Spanish government a large grant of land for the purpose of colonizing actual settlers. Moses Austin lived only a short time after securing the land grant and was succeeded by his son, Stephen F. Austin, who very ably carried forward the plan of locating American settlers in Texas.

Texas at this time was under Mexican rule and attached to the state of Coahuila and the meager legal codes were administered by alcaldes appointed by the central government.

In 1824, Mexico gained independence from Spain. Early disagreements arose between the Mexican government and the Stephen F. Austin colony. This condition of affairs finally led to a declaration of war on October 2, 1835, under the leadership of Stephen F. Austin. General Cos was sent from Mexico with a small army expecting to conquer the Texans in a very short time. The effort failed and General Cos with his army was forced to surrender but was permitted to return to Mexico in December, 1835. Soon thereafter, Santa Anna, president of Mexico and commander of the army, mobilized a large army to invade Texas. The army reached San Antonio on February 23, 1836, and attacked the Texas forces which were fortified in the Alamo. The Alamo fell under vastly superior numbers on March 6, 1836, and this was followed on March 27th by the fall of Goliad. The Mexicans pushed the campaign eastward hoping to completely destroy the entire military organization of the Texans.

April 21, 1836, the Texas army under General Sam Houston met the Mexican army on the San Jacinto battlefield where the Mexicans were ingloriously defeated and their commander-in-chief was made prisoner of war, and peace was restored to the republic.

EARLY SETTLEMENTS

Before the arrival of the Austin colonists the Mexicans established a few towns, mostly for military headquarters, foremost of these was San Antonio, established about 1720. San Felipe on the Brazos was laid out in 1823 for the capitol of the Stephen F. Austin colony, and the general conventions of colonists in 1832-1835 were held here. The first appearance of Sam Houston in Texas affairs was at the convention of 1833 at San Felipe as a delegate from San Augustine. At the last meeting of the general convention held at San Felipe in 1835, officers of a provisional government and members of a general council were selected. This organization was instructed to meet at Washington on the Brazos, on March 1, 1836. At this meeting on March 2, 1836, Texas independence of Mexico was declared and a republic was established, which continued until the state was admitted into the Union in 1845.

CAPITOLS OF TEXAS

The disturbed condition of the country made it necessary to hold meetings of the General Council and Congress at the most accessible points. These assemblies convened accordingly at San Felipe, Washington, Velasco, Columbia and Houston.

Under the administration of President Lamar, congress in session at Houston in January, 1839, appointed five commissioners to select a site for a capitol. The city of Austin was selected and a building containing a room each for the Senate and House was in readiness for the meeting of Congress in November, 1839.

The present capitol building, erected in 1882-1886, is the third capitol building erected in Austin.

The governor's mansion was built in 1853 and first occupied by Governor Pease.

The first congress of the republic and subsequent legislatures provided well for an educational program for Texas. The State University at Austin opened for students in 1883 and the Medical College at Galveston opened in 1891. The A. and M. College opened in 1876 and Sam Houston Normal, Huntsville, the oldest of the state normals was established by act of the legislature in 1879.

Early History of Williamson County

Before the advent of permanent settlers there were two defense outposts established in the territory now known as Williamson County.

Indians at this time infested the country and made frequent raids on the settlers. The government of the republic built a blockhouse fort in 1838 near what is now Cedar Park on the headwaters of Brushy Creek. This fort was garrisoned by rangers, but it was not long before it was destroyed by the Indians and never rebuilt.

Kenney's Fort was perhaps built a little later and was located on the south side of Brushy, opposite Palm Valley. It consisted of two or three log houses surrounded by a stockade. It was from Kenney's Fort that the illfated Santa Fe Expedition started on the perilous mission to Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1841.

Among the important Indian battles fought in the county was the Battle of Brushy which occurred on Cottonwood Creek, five miles south of Taylor, in 1839. The Indians had raided the homes of the settlers on the Colorado river and in pursuit were overtaken here. Some of the best known men of the colony lost their lives in this battle.

In the western part of the county on the North Gabriel, in 1839, Manuel Flores was killed and his forces captured. Flores was a secret agent of the Mexican government and was carrying a large supply of powder and lead to the Indians to be used in warfare against the white settlers, to destroy their homes or force them back into the interior. The ranger forces under Lieutenant James O. Rice made this important capture.

The documents taken in the capture of Flores revealed the plan of insurrection of the Mexican government. Wilbarger, the historian, states that the capture of Flores' baggage and correspondence and breaking up of the expedition "was second only in importance to the Battle of San Jacinto."

The early settlers in Texas located mostly along the Brazos and Colorado rivers. The first settlers in Williamson County located principally along the San Gabriel and Brushy. The pioneer had already established homes at Webberville and Hornsby's Bend on the Colorado and at Port Sullivan and Nashville on the Brazos. These were the nearest settlements to Williamson County and many settlers came into the new country from these locations.

The pioneer fenced the fields with split rails and rock fences, therefore the wooded areas along the streams and in the western

portion of the county were first settled.

From 1839 the country settled with comparative rapidity and the county was organized in 1848. It was named for Robert M. Williamson, a well known jurist, soldier and statesman of the republic.

The new country attracted many families of excellent type from the older states, they came hither to make their homes and to establish the best institutions and conditions in their midst. Roads were laid out to connect the settlements and schools and churches were built. The facilities were limited but the hardy pioneer made the best of his opportunitiy to lay the foundaton for an orderly government and social life.

The first store owned by Josiah Taylor, was opened in 1848, at Shiloh, on Brushy, about three miles southeast of Hutto. The stock carried was very limited.

The first mills for grinding corn were located at Berry's Creek, Wilson Springs and Gabriel Mills, built about 1848-1850.

In this sketch it is only intended to give a brief historical background to the other subjects which follow in the series.

The Webster Massacre

*The following sketch is based on an interview with John W. Darlington, in 1904.

John Webster, a prosperous farmer of Harrison County, Virginia, immigrated to Texas in 1838, with the Hughes and Thompson families and a number of other young men, in all a party of about thirty persons. John W. Darlington, one of the young men of this party, resided in Taylor for several years. Their route to Texas was by boat down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans, thence to Matagorda, Texas, where they arrived January 14, 1838.

While in Matagorda, Webster met Albert C. Horton from whom he bought a certificate for a league and labor of land. According to Mexican custom the league of land was intended for grazing purposes and the labor for cultivation. This land was afterwards found to be located in what is now Burnet County. At Matagorda Webster's party bought a wagon and team and hired another with which they started on their way into the interior.

There were no roads through the low flat marshy country and traveling was slow. At Peach Creek, about sixty miles from Matagorda, they left one of the wagons and part of the household goods in charge of Jno. W. Darlington. The party then proceeded to Gillilands creek, near the Colorado river in Travis County. At this place they rented land and planted a corn crop.

About the first of May a white man and a negro boy were sent to Peach creek for Darlington and the household goods left behind. During the fall of 1838 the Webster party moved to Hornsby's bend on the Colorado river about ten miles below Austin. During the following year at this place a second crop of corn was planted. The purpose of Webster was to ultimately establish a settlement on the land owned by him in Burnet County. He accordingly made up a party consisting of his family (wife and two children), John Stilwell, Flescher, two Reese brothers, Milton Hicks, Albert Silsbee, four other white men, a negro, Nelson, and a Mexican named Antonio. Their effects consisted of two wagons, each drawn by three yoke of oxen, loaded with household goods and supplies. A small drove of horses was taken along. The trip westward was made without special incident until within a few miles of what is now known as Strickling, Burnet County, the objective points of the expedition. Here they were met by a band of about two hundred hostile Indians. The Webster party hastily concealed themselves in a ravine, where they were attacked by the Indians. In this encounter Albert Silsbee was

severely wounded. The Indians withdrew for a time and the Webster party retraced their steps in the direction of the Colorado river settlement. When they reached the South Gabriel between the present locations of Liberty Hill and Leander a consultation was held and some of the party advised making a stand against the Indians at this place where they had the protection of a high bluff. Webster contended that they would lose their live stock if they remained and advised traveling by night in order to reach the settlement before a second attack was made. The travel by night was slow, as the country over which they went was very rough. They succeeded in making only about five miles during the night. At sunrise next morning they emerged from the timber into an open prairie about two miles below the present town of Leander. At this point they discovered the Indians following in their trail. The party was quickly surrounded. They hastily unhitched the oxen and placed the wagons in a position side by side with space of about ten feet between and here the party made their final defense. Against such overwhelming odds the battle was quickly over. The ten white men were found dead between the wagons and the negro and Mexican were found some distance from the others. It is supposed that they were killed while trying to make their escape. Albert Silsbee who was wounded in the previous skirmish, was lying in one of the wagons during the battle and was afterwards horribly mutilated by the Indians. Mrs. Webster and her two children who were in the other wagon, were taken captive together with such household goods as could be used by the Indians. With these they returned to their camp in the San Saba country. Shortly after the massacre some of the stock belonging to the Webster party came into the Hornsby settlement with Indian arrows sticking in their bodies. This alarmed the settlers and they immediately sent out a rescuing party to investigate the cause of this condition of the live stock. The rescuers found the bodies lying as described and they were all buried in one grave near the place of the massacre. After about four months of captivity during which the most inhuman treatment was endured, Mrs. Webster with her two children made their escape. Living on berries and pecans enroute they followed the cow-trail from the mouth of the San Saba river, passing through the wild untraveled country they reached Pilot Knob about two miles south of Round Rock, a distance of about eighty miles. While resting here feeling that they were nearing civilizaton, Mrs. Webster discovered in the distance a party of men on horseback dressed in the garb of civilized man. She supposed these to be white men and came into view that she might be seen and protected. To her surprise and horror the men proved to be Kiowa Indians, who immediately took Mrs. Webster and the two children on their horses with them and proceeded to their western haunts. When nearing their camps they were met by

a band of Commanche Indians who claimed the prisoners. A compromise was agreed on, the Commanches giving in exchange two ponies for Mrs. Webster and the little girl and a mule for the boy. The mother and girl were sent to one camp and the boy to another where they were held in captivity until a final treaty was made between the Indians and the Texas government. While a peace council was being held in San Antonio and not waiting for a general release of prisoners Mrs. Webster found it an easy matter to escape since the warriors were absent attending the Council and only the old men and the squaws of the tribe were left behind. She followed the trail left by the warriors attending the Peace Council. In the course of several days she reached San Antonio almost destitute of clothes and strength. A short time afterwards the boy was released from captivity under the treaty agreement. The mother, son and daughter were reunited in San Antonio, and proceeded to the settlement on Gilliland creek where for a short time they visited with friends, then returned to the home of her childhood in Virginia. She lived only a short time afterwards as the frightful experiences had undermined her strong constitution.

The son, Booker Webster, grew to manhood in Virginia, joined a Virginia company with General Winfield's Scotts' army in Mexico. He was engaged in several battles in Mexico and died of yellow fever in Vera Cruz while enroute home.

The daughter, Patsy Webster, remained in Virginia with relatives until 1851, when she returned to Texas and lived with an uncle near Manor.

She afterwards married Marmaduke Strickling and in 1854-1855 settled at Strickling, Burnet County, on the land which was the objective point of the illfated Webster expedition and owned by John Webster.

Williamson County Court House Sketches

Several years ago Col. W. K. Makemson of Georgetown published an interesting historical pamphlet entitled "First Settlement and Organization of Williamson County." He has long been recognized as the best authority on the early history of the county.

I wrote the Colonel in the spring of 1914 for information relative to the first court houses of Williamson County and followed this with an examination of the court house records at Georgetown. In addition to this source of information I interviewed Ed R. Anderson son of one of the first county commissioners, Dr. W. I. Anderson, who was familiar with practically all of the first officials as well as the incidents mentioned in the early records of the county. Ed R. Anderson was born on a farm below Round Rock March 5, 1848, and was the first male white child born in the territory embracing Williamson County. Dr. Anderson, the father of Ed R. Anderson, moved with his family to Georgetown in 1853.

For several years I have had in my possession two oak sills taken from the old dilapidated building which stood for years on the south bank of the little branch at Jonah. This building was part of the first court house owned by Williamson County. It was bought in 1863 by J. M. Mileham under an order of sale of the commissioners court and moved to Jonah where it stood until torn down about 1913.

In following the proceedings of the county and commissioners courts from 1849 to 1877 in search of data relative to the court houses I ran across some interesting transactions which will furnish a striking comparison with the more extensive court business of today.

It should be remembered that there were but very few settlers in the county in 1848 the year of its organization. The few settlers located near the streams convenient to wood and water. It was less than ten years before the county was organized that Dr. Kenney in 1839 built a fort and stockade on the south side of Brushy Creek, near Palm Valley, which is generally accepted as the first permanent settlement of Williamson County.

J. H. GRIFFITH.

ORGANIZATION OF WILLIAMSON COUNTY

"By an act of the Legislature approved by Governor Wood, March 13, 1848 ,the county was created. It was named in honor of Judge

Robt. M. Williamson. In the act creating the county, John Berry, Sr., W. C. Dalrymple, D. C. Cowan, Washington Anderson and James O. Rice were named commissioners to locate the county site." The commissioners met under a live oak tree then standing where Locust and Church Streets now intersect. They accepted the proposition of George W. Glasscock, Sr., to give the county 173 acres of land and the county site to be located thereon. In honor of the donor, George W. Glasscock the town was named Georgetown. Soon after the town was located, the surveyors, Matthias Wilbarger and D. C Cowan, laid off the tract in blocks and lots. On July 4, 1848, the lots were sold at public sale for the benefit of the county."

The election of county officers followed a few months later, apparently very little was done in 1849 but in 1850 the records show a considerable amount of preliminary work was accomplished. Greenlief Fisk was the county judge then known as chief justice, the county commissioners were Jacob A. Harrell, Richard Tankersly, D. H. McFaden and W. I. Anderson.

The first meetings of the court in 1849 and 1850 were held in a log-house located on the east side of the square on or near the location of the Williamson County Sun office. The log-house was about fourteen feet square and was probably rented temporarily.

The commissioners court at the March term, 1850, had up for consideration the subject of building a court house but "not being in possession of a proper draft suitable for the erection of said building" the matter was deferred until the following Monday. At the later meeting the court met according to adjournment and took under advisement the erection of a court house in the center of the square in the town of Georgetown, and having considered the propriety of appropriating public means to the best advantage, having regard for durability as well as public convenience, the court therefore decreed that the said house should be built of rock."

The dimension of the proposed court house is given as fifty feet square, with wall nineteen feet high—the lower story ten feet and the upper story nine feet high. There were four rooms in the lower story. A hallway extended through the center from east to west and another from north to south. The stairway was in the east hall and extended to the one court room in the upper story—two chimneys were built in the walls with two fire places below and two above—the lower floor was of sawed limestone slabs—the upper floor of wood.

Work was not started on this building until 1854—John Dunlop was awarded the contract for its erection. The plans and specifications were drafted by Jas. S. Williams for which service he was paid $5.00 —the State Gazette, published at Austin, carried the advertisement calling for sealed bids to be received March 21, 1854. W. I. Anderson was appointed by the court to superintend the work.

It appears that work on the building dragged along for some time, perhaps financial difficulties as well as other matters arose to delay the work. A meeting of the commissioners court was held on the third Monday in October, 1855, to consider the advisability of issuing unconditional land certficates to any persons that may have claims against the county in connection with the court house building. Ed H. Vontress and E. B. Turner represented the county in adjusting these matters and were allowed a fee of $20.00 for their services. Evan Williams in the meantime had taken over the contract and carried same on to completion.

The building was received from the contractor at the March term, 1857.

TEMPORARY COURT HOUSE PURCHASED

It has already been explained that the first building used as a court house was not owned by the county, therefore at a special term of the court held in March, 1851, with Greenlief Fisk, presiding, D. H. McFaden, Neal McGaffey, commissioner; Allen Stroud, sheriff, and B. Gooch, clerk, attending, it was ordered that a certain house located on what is now the lot adjoining the south side of the Masonic building, be purchased from Wm. Patterson for a consideration of $390.00 for a court house.

This was a frame building about 14 by 30 feet, weatherboarded but not ceiled inside. The side of the building fronted the square with one door on each side of the building and it had four windows. This court house was ordered put in repair at the May term 1851 and also provide suitable furniture for the accommodation of the courts. Sheriff Joab B. Harrell was instructed to employ a mechanic and among other things a suitable railing was to be built across the house for a bar. The commissioners in session in May, 1853, decided that this building was not large enough to accommodate the District Court soon to convene in Georgetown and accordingly rented from Evan Williams "both rooms of his large two story building at $2.50 per day for the term of the District Court."

THE FIRST COUNTY JAIL

The county acquired the temporary court house in March, 1851, and at the following May term the commissioners issued an order to pay N. B. Johnson for building a jail for the county. The jail was located immediately east of the court house on the same block. It was constructed of hewn logs. There was a double wall of the hewn logs with space between the walls. This space was filled with hard stones to prevent inmates from sawing out or likewise being liberated from the outside. The overhead of the cell was constructed of logs and the only entrance to the jail was a trap door in the top. The outer wall extended about 6 feet above the top of the cell and this

second story was covered with shingles. There were two grates in the wall to admit sunlight and air. The jail was about 18 feet square.

EXTRACTS FROM COURT RECORDS

The records show that certain bills were ordered paid March 25, 1850.

"On motion a claim against the county in favor of Johnson and Moore for a large trunk furnished the county for the safekeeping of the county records, documents, etc., amounting to $4.50, was presented to the court. The court being satisfied under present circumstances of the propriety of such a purchase ordered the same allowed."

A bill for $1.75 of B. Gooch, clerk, for money paid out by him for hinges, fasteners, etc., for window shutters of the clerk's office was ordered paid and another bill was presented for guarding a prisoner four and one-half days at $1.50 per day and night was taken under advisement until the next term of court.

In November, 1856, the court rented A. S. Walker the lower room in the northwest corner of the stone court house for $6.00 per month.

At the November term, 1863, M. E. Steele was appointed commissioner to sell the old wooden court house to the highest bidder in Confederate Treasury Notes. John J. Dimmett was appointed county attorney in January, 1867, and at the same meeting the northeast corner room in the court house was rented to Wm. H. Foster, publisher of the Georgetown Watchman. However, the first paper published in Georgetown was the Williamson County Intelligencer and its editor, W. T. Marshock.

The northeast corner room was subsequently rented to Makemson and Foster and later H. F. Rosewood the last tenant had a shoe shop there, in 1868.

TALK OF A NEW COURT HOUSE

The Commissioners in session, April 17, 1877, brought up for consideration the subject of a new court house but no action was taken and at a meeting held the following month the matter was deferred indefinitely. In August the matter was again brought up and a motion carried on August 14, 1877, to build a new court house. The plans of Preston and Ruffin were adopted September 12, 1877, and sealed bids for the erection of the building were called for. The bid of John Didelot, $27,400, was accepted October 27, 1877, and the contract awarded. The building was rushed to completion and was turned over to the county September 2, 1878. On the following day allotment was made of offices to the county officers.

The commissioners court at this time was composed of D. S. Chessher, county judge; H. B. Sheppard, J. P. Smith, I. T. Lawler and J. P. Magill, commissioners.

At this time the jail was located in the court house square, and the question of its removal to some other location was discussed at a meeting of the Commissioners Court held March 26, 1890 with Judge Chessher presiding, commissioners present, J. T. Wales, W. A. Smith,, D. McCunningham, and J. M. Allen.

The jail was ordered torn down and a fire proof vault for the protection of the county records and an upper story for the commissioners court and county judge's office was built on to the northeast corner of the court house. In passing on from the subject of the old court house, erected in 1877 mention should be made of the faithful old janitor, "Uncle Jimmy Taylor." He served the county for many years and if he had actually owned the property it would not have received better attention than was given it at the hands of "Uncle Jimmy."

THE PRESENT COURT HOUSE

The court house erected in 1877-1878 was showing signs of disintegration along about 1903. It was inspected from time to time by the commissioners, grand juries, architects and others and pronounced unsafe. The building was not only considered unsafe but inadequate to present day requirements.

The commissioners court in session September 9, 1909, with T. J. Lawhon, county judge, W. R. McElroy, W. A. Custard, M .M. Gardner, and S. G. Yakey, commissioners present, passed a resolution condemning the old court house on account of defective foundation and walls and considered that same should be torn down and a new building erected. After arranging the necessary preliminaries the plans and specifications of C. H. Page and Brother were adopted February 19, 1910, and a short time thereafter the contract for construction of the building was awarded to W. C. Whitney of Beaumont. The contract exclusive of furniture was practically $115,000.00. Richard Critz was the county judge at the time of completion of the court house.

It will be seen from the sketch that the county organization has occupied five court houses. Two of the court houses were located on the block across the street east of the square and the last three in the center of the square in Georgetown.

Sketches of Early Days in Taylor

An accurate and detailed account of the growth of Taylor, taken from the Taylor Daily Press of January 12, 1923.

It has been my purpose for some time to contribute some reminiscences of the early days of Taylor which I have been collecting for several years.

I have selected such of the data as may be of local interest. In the sketches which will follow I have endeavored where practicable to verify facts furnished me in the interviews with the early settlers.

In the reminiscences I have not undertaken to cover a range of facts sufficiently complete to be called a history of Taylor. It is indeed an enormous task to cover in detail all of the important facts connected with the growth of any city. I was fortunate in securing interviews with some of the well known men of Williamson County who lived here before Taylor was laid off in 1876.

Among those to whom I am especially indebted for information may be mentioned the following: J. W. Darlington, C. P. Vance, J. E. Stiles, C. B. Wilson, H. T. Stearns, J. S. Rogers, A. Anderson, Hargis Brothers and others.

A glimpse of the pioneer settlements established in this portion of Williamson County is given as a historical background to the location of Taylor.

J. H. GRIFFITH.

EARLY SETTLEMENTS

Settlements were made earlier than 1860 on Brushy and San Gabriel, also at Wilson Springs and on Turkey Creek.

Among the early settlers on Brushy were Calvin and E. B. Barker, Willis Avery, Bartlett Sims, Charles Saul, Doctor Knight, Daniel Kimbro and James O. Rice, the latter had the first postoffice and a tavern at Rice's Crossing.

On the San Gabriel were the families of Hamblen, Gordon, Rubarth, McFaden, Stearns, Eubank, Sloan, Easley and other.

East of Taylor on Turkey Creek, Nicholas and James Branch settled and at Wilson Springs, R. W. Wilson resided.

LATER SETTLEMENTS

On the hillside southwest of Taylor at the A. Symes place was a cowman's camp, and at the mouth of Flag Springs branch southeast

was a house and perhaps one near Flag Springs. These nearby settlements appear to have been only temporary habitations. With the exception of the three named locations there were no other permanent settlements nearer the town site of Taylor in 1876 than the one at Wilson Springs which was originally settled in 1849 by John Gooch, and later passed into the hands of R. W. Wilson, father of Charles B. Wilson.

EARLY STORES AND MERCHANTS

The nearest stores were at Circleville and Rice's Crossing. The one at Circleville was owned about 1871 by Seneca D. Brown, who later moved to New York where he became a prominent financier.

C. Tompkins, brother-in-law of Hargis Brothers, had a store at Rice's Crossing in 1877. Stores have continued without interruption at both places.

LOCATION OF TAYLOR, JUNE, 1876.

Taylor was first named Taylorsville for an official of the International and Great Northern Railroad.

The Texas Land Company with headquarters at Palestine, Texas, in the spring of 1876 bought the Taylor town site off of the John Winsett and James C. Eaves surveys. The company advertised a sale of town lots to take place in June, 1876, presuming the I. and G. N. would be completed into Taylor by that time. The railroad was not completed by that time but the sale of lots took place about June 10, 1876. Among the first lots sold was one bought by C. P. Vance who was then merchandising at Circleville associated with James A. Simons. He bought lot 14 in block 9 and later bought lot 15 in the same block. Wiley and Porter who were then engaged in business at Davilla bought lots 16 and 17 in the same block. Soon thereafter both firms opened for business on these locations.

In March, 1878, Womack and Sturgis bought lots 1, 2 and 3 in block 4. This is the present Speegle Brothers location and includes the old T. J. Kamp hotel property. The firm was engaged in business at this location until the fire which occurred in the late winter of 1878. This fire originated in the Kamp hotel and swept all of the wooden buildings on West Main Street from First Street to the Wiley and Porter building, and also consumed the buildings on the opposite side of Main Street to the Melasky location on lot 12, block 10.

After the fire Womack and Sturgis bought lots 3 and 4 in block 9, which are the third and fourth lots on the north side of Second Street and west of Main Street. The firm erected a substantial two-story brick on this location. The lower part was used for the mercantile business and the upper part was a well arranged assembly hall, provided with a stage.

Other merchants following were J. Melasky, L. H. Goldstein, Talley and Meade, J. E. Tucker and others.

EARLY RESIDENTS

H. Dickson, the first agent for the I. and G. N. R. R., bought residence property lying west of Main Street and north of Seventh Street. His residence was located on the corner. The Dickson Addition extended north and west of the residence. Across Main Street immediately east of the Dickson residence was the old C. P. Vance homestead and on the same block east of the C. P. Vance was the James A. Simons home. Col. Fowzer built in the hackberry grove on the location of the High School building. R. S. Porter built on the southeast corner of block 21 at the intersection of Main and Fourth Streets. Others also located at this time.

FIRST HOTELS AND BOARDING HOUSES.

The T. J. Kamp hotel, located on the corner of West Main and First Streets, was the best of the early hotels. Other places kept as boarding houses or hotels before the Taylor Hotel was built by Burkitt and Murphy may be mentioned: Napier Hotel, on the present location of the Taylor Hardware Co.; The Minor Hotel, on the site of T. W. Marse Co. Julius A. Kroschewsky had a bakery and restaurant on the corner of East Main and First Streets.

FIRST PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Soon after the town started in 1876 Prof. John McMurray had a school on the site of the J. W. Darlington residence on Sixth Street, immediately east of the Baptist Church. Here was also held the first Sunday School. Perhaps a little later Mrs. Kitty Hutchins had a school on the location of the present Catholic rectory. Prof. Green in 1882-1883 had a school in the old Odd Fellows' building, located north of the city square at the corner of Main and Fifth Streets. The "Lone Star Institute" about 1884-1885 was located in the northwestern part of the city, on Victoria Street. The teachers were Prof. J. V. Brown and wife. Prof. McMurray abandoned his first location for larger quarters and acquired the lots in block 28 immediately in front of the Presbyterian Church.

The McMurray school house was a one-story building about twenty-four by sixty feet. It was a boxed, stripped and painted building. The entrance was from the west, on Talbot Street. There was a belfry and bell over the entrance. The playground was immediately south of the school building.

CITY OF TAYLOR ACQUIRES FIRST SCHOOL LOCATION

In August, 1883, the City of Taylor bought of H. Dickson all of

block 4 in Dickson Addition as a location for the city schools, and the following year a school building was erected on this site. This building was framed and weather boarded and in size about 24 by 110 feet. A porch on the south extended about two-thirds the length of the building, and the building was divided into three rooms connected from east to west. The east room was for the high school, the center room was for the grammar school and the west room for the primary department. The first teachers here were A. E. Hill, superintendent, teacher of high school; J. S. Jones, teacher of grammar school, and Miss Emma Puckett, teacher of primary.

The school soon required additional room in consequence of the rapid growth of the city and a room was built about ten feet east of the main building. These buildings were removed and in 1890 what was known as the old high school building was erected.

The first graduates of the Taylor Public Schools were Mrs. Robt. L. Shoaf (nee Miss Lillian Noyes) and Fergusson Doak, the only members of the class of 1887.

The school trustees at the time the old brick high school building was erected but torn down in recent years were: Dr. A. V. Doak, C. Mendel, C. H. Welch, J. P. Sturgis, James Griffith, and Hugh Burns. The City Council in the same year was composed of Mayor J. O. Frink; Aldermen T. J. Kamp, C. M. Still, J. F. Black, John Threadgill and J. F. Bowers.

EARLY CITY AND PRECINCT OFFICERS

Squires John Napier and J. B. Wright were the first Justices of Peace. W. A. Scruggs was probably the first constable. In 1884 the City Council was composed of the following: Mayor Daniel Moody; Aldermen J. W. Womack, H. Dickson, S. Riley, James A. Simons and M. R. Hoxie.

PROFESSIONS REPRESENTED

Among the first physicians were Doctors A. V. Doak, J. S. Brown, S. B. Williams, F. T. Cook and John Threadgill, although the latter named physician did not attempt to practice to any extent after coming to Taylor.

The legal profession appears to have been represented about this time by John W. Parker, now of Houston.

The first newspaper editors were Minor H. Brown, who published the Taylorsville Times, and Geo. R. Scott and associates, publishers of the Taylor Phonograph.

THE MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD REACHES TAYLOR

In the spring of 1882 the Missouri Pacific Ry., now (the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Ry.) was built into Taylor and remained the terminus for several years.

This railroad and the I. & G. N. maintained a joint office with the same agent for several years.

TAYLOR WATER SYSTEM

In 1882-1883 Geo. W. Burkitt and Dan Murphy Sr. put in a water works system to supply the city. The first supply of water came from springs in the Murphy and Mendel pastures. This source of supply was soon found to be inadequate and a pipe line was installed from the reservoir in the city to the San Gabriel. On account of the occasional summer drouths it was found that this source of water supply could not be depended on, however, the question of water supply was permanently solved by the present owners of the Taylor Water Co. in drilling the deep artesian well which furnishes an abundance of water.

FIRST BANKS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION

The first bank in Taylor was a private bank owned by Miller Brothers and Robertson. It was discontinued about 1883.

In 1883 the First National Bank opened for business followed in 1888 by the Taylor National Bank, in 1900 by the City National Bank, in 1913 by the First State Bank and Trust Co.

The Taylor Savings and Loan Association started business in 1885.

FIRST COTTON GIN

It has been said that the first cotton gin built in Taylor was located on the site of the Taylor Bedding Co.'s mattress factory, and built in 1877.

FIRST CHURCHES

The Texas Land Company, owner of the Taylor townsite, encouraged the building of churches and named only a nominal consideration in the deeds to the property deeded by the company to the first churches of Taylor.

According to the records the first church property acquired was lot 6, block 33, deeded March 11, 1878, to the Presbyterian Church.

The trustees named were J. D. Strayhorn, Schoonmaker, R. S. Porter, Jno. McLean, and Wm. T. Powell. Soon after the property was acquired a frame church building was erected. This building was used until a short time before the present brick building was erected in 1912. Among the first pastors were Reverend Jas. P. Lyle, although Prof. McMurray often conducted services here and perhaps others before Rev. Lyle.

The Christian Church bought lot 1, block 32, April 8, 1878, and erected thereon a frame church building. The trustees named in the deed were C. P. Vance, J. Allen Gano, C. Mendel, James Hamilton and George W. Hamilton.

Rev. Ferguson was among the first pastors, although Mr. Abney

often conducted services here. The present brick church building was erected in 1891.

The Roman Catholic Church located on lots 6 and 7, block 24, acquired the location September 21, 1878. The property was deeded to C. M. Dubuis, Bishop of Galveston. A frame church building was soon thereafter erected on this location.

The present church building was erected in 1894. The first pastor was Father John Lauth.

The Baptist Church bought the church site October 21, 1882, and soon afterwards erected a temporary church building. Later a substantial octagon shaped frame building was built. This building was destroyed by fire, and a brick building was erected in 1899. The first pastors were Revs. Joseph Gronda and J. B. McFarland.

The church property of the Baptist Church was deeded to the following trustees: John Threadgill, O. W. Patty and E. Rhodes.

The first property acquired by the Methodist Church for a building location was lot 6 in block 26, on Porter Street, deeded March 26, 1879. The lot was not built on by the church and was afterwards sold and the present location, lots 6 and 7, in block 21, was acquired by deed dated in 1885. The trustees named in the deed to the Talbot Street location were: J. M. McCartney, S. B. Williams, J. L. Pollock and M. Walters. A frame building was built in 1885 and used until a short time before the erection of the present brick building in 1900. Taylor was part of a Methodist circuit until about the fall of 1885 when Rev. John M. Barcus was appointed to the Taylor station, and half of the time given to Temple. Before this time services were conducted at the Odd Fellows' building and perhaps at other places before the church building was erected in 1885.

The St. James' Episcopal Church bought the northwest corner of block 42, May 26, 1892. The present building was erected soon thereafter. The church vestry at this time was composed of the following: P. M. Woodall, J .R. Boswell, D. K. Woodward ,A. V. Doak and D. R. Meade.

The first pastors were Reverends Duncan and Lloyd.

The Swedish Methodist held service in their building on Howard Street which they had purchased from the Cumberland Presbyterians. This property was sold and in 1910 the present site was acquired, lots 6, 7 and 8, in block 2, Murphy Addition.

The first pastor in 1900 was Rev. E. Severin. The first pastor at the present location was Rev. T. J. Westerberg.

The Saint Paul Lutheran Church property on lot 1, block 42, was acquired by deed dated January 15, 1917. Rev. A. Hartmann was the first pastor at this location. The denomination had previously for several years conducted services in their frame building in the

western part of the city.

The Bohemian Lutherans have a frame church building on the corner of Cecelia and Sloan Streets. Rev. Joseph Barton was among the first pastors.

It should be explained that some of the denominations mentioned above held services before their first church buildings were constructed.

STREET CAR SYSTEM—1890

It is perhaps not generally known of late years that Taylor at one time had a street car line. It was owned by Dr. A. V. Doak. The line started on First Street at the intersection of Porter Street. It followed the street west to Main, north on Main to Seventh, west on Seventh to the Pavillion, located on the site of Dr. A. W. Gould's residence. Proceeding south on Sloan Street to Third Street, turning east to Doak Street and from there south to Second Street and thence east to the Main Street intersection of the line. The cars were small but adequate, each car was drawn by two Spanish mules. Two boards were placed on the inside of the track for the mules to walk on. The line was abandoned after a few years.

In concluding these sketches it should be said that the rich black lands surrounding Taylor, together with the favorable geographical location and the two trunk line railroads attracted a very fine type of early citizens. Many of them located nearby and engaged in ranching and farming.

It is hard to imagine the wonderful changes. With muddy streets and no side walks in the beginning, with scarcely any of the modern conveniences, we who remember these things of forty years ago can better appreciate the paved streets, sidewalks and other modern conveniences of today.