

# THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL

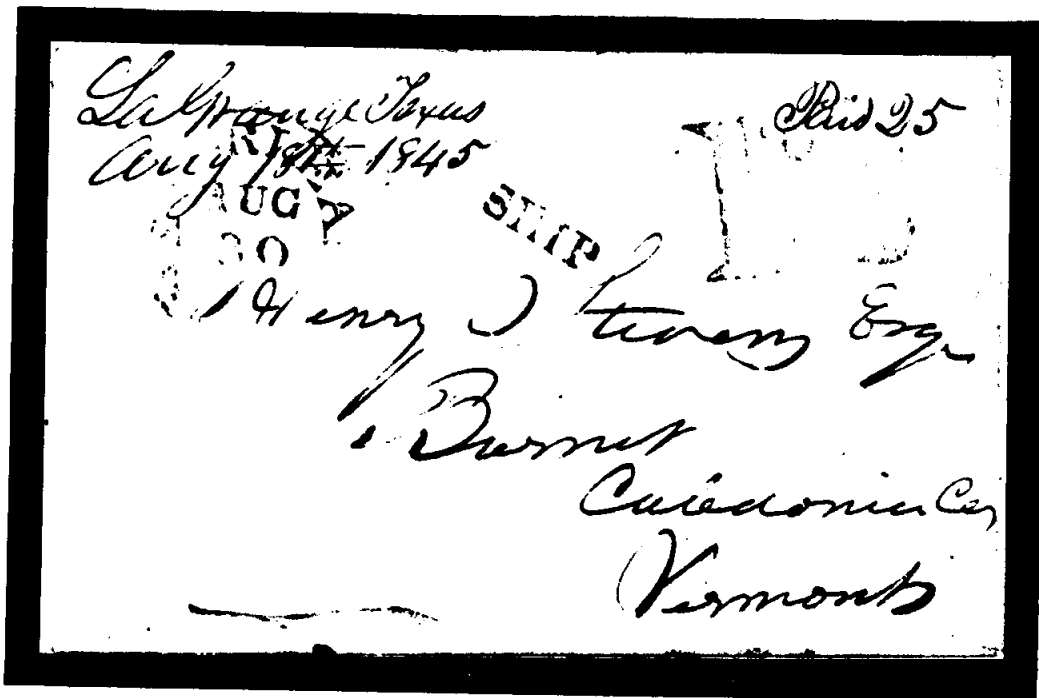


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Dave Jarrett, who furnished us the cover for our Journal, advises that this is a "La Grange, Texas, Aug. 18th, 1845" and "Paid 25" ms. and a blue "New Orleans Ship 12" handstamp on a folded lettersheet. It is another excellent example of a combination Texas Republic and U.S. Postal Service cover.

# THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Dues \$5 per year, payable to Secretary-Treasurer

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## PRESIDENTS PAGE

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the T.P.H.S. members who again elected me as president of this group. It is an honor, and I shall do my best to continue the goals and activities of our organization. With the help of A.W.(Bill) Peterson as vice-president and Jim Alexander as secretary-treasurer we look forward to two more years of a viable, productive organization. Mr. Gordon Hyatt continues as editor of our journal and I believe you may look forward to a continuing series of fine articles in each issue of the journal.

It seems such a short time ago, that Charles Deaton our first president was contacting charter members and soliciting articles for the first issue of a journal. The old adage that, "time flies when you are busy doing something interesting and fun" really applies to this publication.

As this issue of the journal goes to press we are commencing our seventh volume. Sincere thanks go out from your editor and from your president to those members who have contributed articles. Without your help the job of getting out four issues each year would be a terrible burden and the quality of the content would surely suffer. We appreciate your help and look forward to your continued production of high quality enthusiastic articles on Texas Postal History. If you have not yet written something for your journal you owe it to yourself and to your collection to make 1982 the year. Do it now.

### OTHER MATTERS

The secretary reports that 1982 dues continue to be recieved. Several members who postponed their payment until after the beginning of the New Year and who have forgotten will recieve a second and final notice toward the end of January. Dues remain \$5.00 for 1982, but it appears probable that increasing costs of postage, printing, and production of the journal will force a dues increase in 1983.

For members wishing to fill out or complete back issues of the T.P.H.S. Journal; these are still available at \$5.00/volume or \$2.00 for a specific issue. They can be obtained by writing to our Secretary-treasurer.

In past issues of the journal a number of reference books have been cited as being particularly useful and interesting for Texas postal historians. There are two additions I would like to suggest as having great merit for members seeking information on the Republic of Texas. The first is a two volume compilation of papers by James M. Day titled, "Post Office Papers of the Republic of Texas 1836-1839", and "Post Office Papers of the Republic of Texas 1839-1840". The second reference is a more general text covering the social and economic history of the Republic and titled, "The Texas Republic" by William Ransom Hogan.

#### ANNUAL SPRING MEETING

The annual spring meeting of the T.P.H.S. is to be held March 6th in Austin, Texas. We will be meeting in conjunction with the Austin Stamp Club show--AUSPEX-82--at the Quality Inn South. This facility is located at 2200 South Interregional (I-35) on the south side of the city. (Tel.512-444-0561).

If you have not already made plans to attend you should do so soon. The location is central, the facilities are excellent, the city is blessed by a wide range of attractions for the whole family.

We look for a large turnout and sincerely hope that each of you will be there to enjoy the fun, renew old friendships and find that missing cover you've hunted for all year long.

Mr. William Bauer, President of A.P.S., has been invited to speak to the group during the afternoon session. While his acceptance of this engagement was conditional, the meeting promises to be an interesting gathering and we are sure you will long remember the event. See you there on March 6th.

#### EDITOR' COMMENTS

By coincidence the cover shown on the Journal cover from Dave Jarrett ties in beautifully with President Bill Emery's article on the Republic of Texas mail. We thank both of them.

We are sure you are enjoying the series of articles by Norma Watz on Wharton County Postal History. The study of ones own home county can be very rewarding and rich in Postal History. We hope more of our members will give us an article on their interests.

Our annual meeting in Austin on March 6th should be the best yet. I am looking forward to it. See ya'll there.

A REPUBLIC OF TEXAS LETTER FROM A WAR HERO AS HE LEAVES  
TO FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE

by Bill Emery

The Republic of Texas (1836 - 1845) existed during a time of crisis and was a time of change. The population of Texas more than quadrupled. Schools, newspapers and incipient industries were established. The number of post offices rose from four in 1835 to forty-one in 1836 after the appointment of John Rice Jones as the Postmaster General.

Continuing hostilities with Mexico, serious Indian depredations, a convulsion of speculation followed by a devastating financial depression, and the failure of Texas politicians to unite behind a single set of policies for the Republic, resulted in ten years of crisis.

In 1842, the Republic teetered on the brink of disaster. Its territory invaded by Mexicans, its farms and ranches burned and plundered by Indians, its currency deflated and valueless, its government unable to meet obligations or perform services, and its lines of communication totally disrupted. A passage from the address of Sam Houston to the Sixth Congress of the Republic on June 27, 1842, shows the dismal state of communications at this time. Houston states, "A matter of the liveliest interest to the community is the regular transportation of the mails, but for want of appropriations by the last Congress their transportation throughout the country entirely ceased. Communications between different sections and the circulation of intelligence have been wholly obstructed. On account of this state of things the Executive has found himself greatly embarrassed in dissemination as well as in receiving correct and speedy information, for he has not one dollar at his disposition for the employment of expresses, even under the most urgent circumstances."

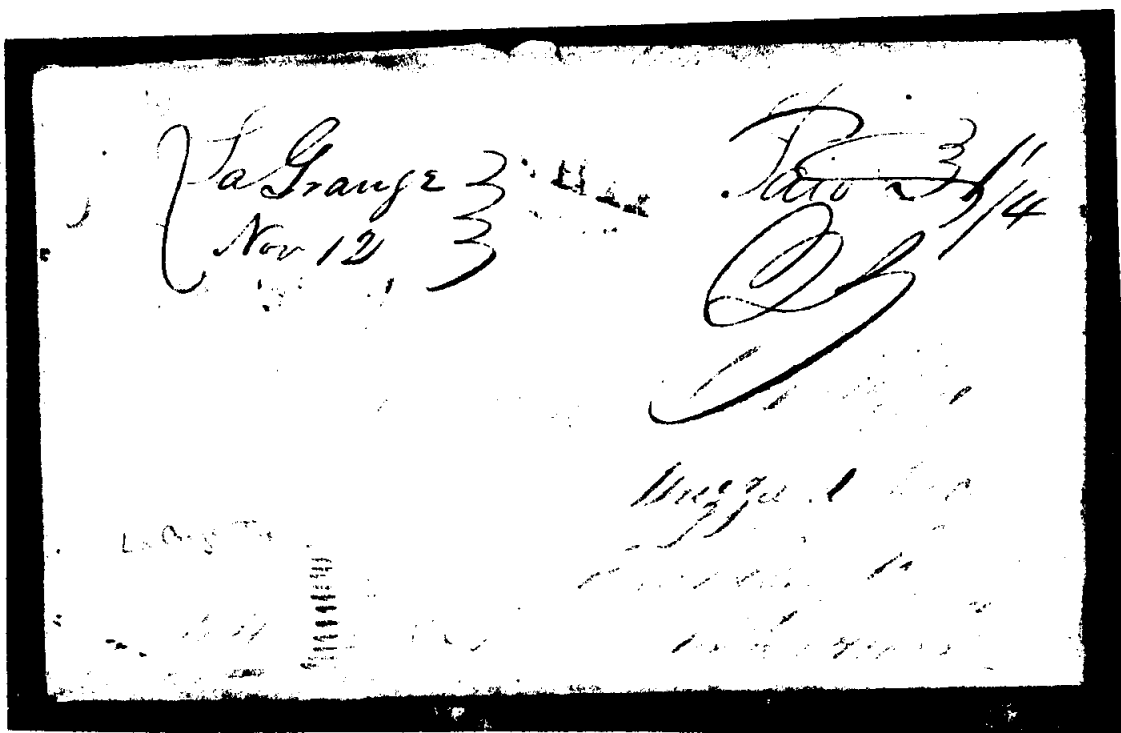
Today it is clear, that the problems faced by the Republic of Texas in 1842 must have radically altered the volume of mail received and the distribution of letters over various routes that had been established. It appears probable that fewer letters were written and that fewer were received.

A hasty survey of several sources listing Republic of Texas letters reveals that almost all 1842 letters bear datelines of settlements along the coast. Likewise, letters received at Texas ports in 1842 are addressed to coastal settlements. No listing of an 1842 letter originating more than 50 miles inland could be found.

The recent acquisition of an 1842 Republic of Texas letter from La Grange (apprx. 90 miles inland) was cause for considerable elation and excitement and prompted the reporting of this item in the present article. See Figure 1.

This letter mailed from La Grange, Texas, November 12, 1842, during the height of the 2nd Runaway Scrape, is addressed to Rev. James. H. Gillespie, Buzzards Roost, Franklin County, North Alabama. The La Grange postmaster of 1842, Hiram Farrel, accepted payment for the Texas portion of the postal fees and wrote across the face of the letter in black ink, "La Grange, Nov. 12, Paid 31 ¼". This fee represented pre-

payment of the 1842 rate of 25¢ for letters travelling more than 100 miles but less than 200 miles. It also prepaid a 6¼¢ fee for letters to be placed aboard ship.



Postal regulations of this period offered an option to the postal patrons to either prepay their postage on domestic mail or to have the fees collected at the letters destination. Since the mails were so irregular, the contractors so irresponsible, and the travel so difficult, many patrons chose to pay the post office upon the safe delivery of their letters. This letter illustrates both a prepayment of the Texas postal fees and the optional post-payment of the United States Post Office fee.

Prepayment of the Republic of Texas postage (31¼¢) was mandatory in this case because the letter was addressed to a foreign country (U.S.). The two countries had not yet worked out a policy for reciprocal exchange of the mails and a crediting of each others postal charges.

Something of the financial difficulties experienced by the young Republic and its postal system during 1842 is emphasized by the fact that all postage fees had to be paid in gold, silver or Government exchequer bills. These exchequer bills fluctuated wildly in the money market reaching as low as 2¢ on the dollar. Some law makers, recognizing the fallen value of their paper money, passed a Congressional Act on July 23, 1842, containing the amazing clause, "bills (exchequer) had to be accepted at current rate at which such bills are selling in the market". If this directive was followed by the postmaster at La Grange in November 1842, it may have required more than \$15 in paper money to send this letter the 125 miles to Galveston.

Transport of the letter shown in Figure 1 was by stage over the 1842 Republic of Texas Postal Route #33. This route connecting Austin to Houston, passed via the

settlements of Comanche, Bastrop, Primm's, La Grange and San Felipe. The original contractor for this route (1840) was John Green. He agreed to transport the mails twice weekly each way for \$12,000 per year. Archive records show however, that between 1840-45 there were a series of transfers made in the contract for mail over this route. Starke-Burgess took over from Green, and was in turn replaced by Smith and Jones, who released the route to J.F. Brown in the fall of 1844.

It was recalled by one of the passengers who travelled the Austin to Houston route in 1842, "that the coaches were old and rickety, breakdowns were frequent, and passengers had to literally work their passage in order to reach their destination." This early traveler also relates, "that male passengers were often required to carry fence rails on their shoulders for long distances as they walked beside the wagons from one mudhole to the next." The fare from Houston to Austin was \$15 with no deduction for labor or discomfort. Under optimum conditions, i.e. when the road was dry and the rivers fordable, the trip took three days.

Postal history per se seems to end with the analysis of postal fees collected and the routes a particular letter traveled, but sometimes the curious are further rewarded when they unfold an old stampless folded letter and find it filled with interesting historical details.

The letter shown in Figure 1 was written by Robert Addison Gillespie, hero of the Mexican War and the man for whom Gillespie County, Texas was named. The contents of Gillespie's letter are as follows:

Nov. 1, 1842

Dear Mother,

I wrote to brother William about a month since and agreeable to a promise then made I write you again before leaving for the West. There is now one thousand soldiers at San Antonio and recently waiting orders from the Executive to move West. When such orders may be sent I am unable to say but it is probable no grand movement will be made until the Congress convenes which will be on the 16th of this month.

Most of the militia West of the River Nueces have been ordered out by the President and I think our Congress will force him to throw such forces into the field to operate against the Mexicans.

Rumor says that there are now three thousand Mexicans on the Nueces, and that their force is augmenting daily but there is not much reliance to be placed upon such reports. We know nothing certain about their movements.

I have purchased a splendid charger and will leave in the morning for San Antonio with the intention of joining the spy Company and hope we may be able to spy the Mexicans out and learn something certain of their movements. I will remain out West until we know what Congress does and should we be strong enough to cross the Rio Grande will be one of that number but I fear something may turn up which will back up the opposition. General Houston is decidedly opposed to an offensive war

and he has only ordered out the militia so as to enable him to carry out his favorite scheme of securing the seat of Government to Washington or at least from Austin. His whole soul seems bent upon this objective and I have no doubt would sacrifice the country to effect it though I may not do him justice as I look upon him as one of the most self-concieted, black-hearted, hypocrites unhung and that the dead will never have their due until he gets there.

Such feelings you may think does not become me but it is my firm conviction and candid opinion his past acts will prove it.

With such an Executive the chance for an offensive war is certainly very gloomy and our only hope is now fixed in Congress. What they may do is as uncertain as the wind. Self-interest and personal direction, judging from our other Congress will be their only object. One thing however is certain, that unless we cross the Rio Grande and whip the Mexicans the Colorado River will soon be a Western Frontier.

I look upon our present situation as being much worse than to be under the Nexican Government and it behoves us to make one grand effort to force an acknowledgement of our Independence by Mexico or let us fall in the struggle and cease to exist as a Republic, a twist to war but understand me distinctly that I go as a Fayette Volunteer not as one of the militia.

All the Land Offices of the Republic have been closed by proclamation of the Commissioners and will not be opened again until the War is over or the Rio Grande Expedition is abandoned. Our land claims remain as they were when I last wrote you upon the subject. I feel perfectly certain of holding the locations now made and think I may be able to locate the balance equally as well at some future day. I had much rather retain the claims than to locate them on wild lands 200 miles from my settlements as I mentioned in my former letter. James P. Hudson, County Surveyor for this County knows more about our business than any other one, particularly the land locations, but I need not refresh your memory upon this subject as I fear the war will not be carried on and should it be I have a presentiment that I shall return safe.

We have had a great deal of sickness in this neighborhood for the last three weeks but it is now becoming more healthy. My health is unusually fine. Cousin James Huston is going out West but his horse is not sufficient to join the spy company. He wishes to be remembered to all and should you see his father say to him he is well.

Will you believe dear relatives that I have not received a letter from any of the family for the last twelve months. I can not believe you have not written and am unable to derive the cause of my not receiving them. Do pray all of you write frequently as I am very anxious to hear from you. Direct your letters to this place and they will be forwarded to me hereever I may be. You need not look for any more letters from me as it is presently impossible to write or send a letter while in the West.



Early in 1844 Gillespie was again recruited by Capt. Hays. While on scout June 8, 1844, his company met a large band of Comanche Indians on Walker Creek. Gillespie was severely wounded, but almost as the company seemed to be on the verge of destruction, Gillespie's rifle killed the Comanche chief and the Indians withdrew.

Gillespie exploits had been well known across the Texan Frontier but his rise to fame came as a result of his activities in the Mexican War. In 1846 he was appointed Captain of Company K, First Texas Regiment, commanded by Col. Hays and attached to the U.S. Army of General Zackery Taylor for the invasion of Mexico. Gillespie reached Laredo the first week of July. From Laredo his company moved downriver to join Gen. Taylor at Camargo, reaching there the third week in July.

At the beginning of August, Gen. Taylor moved with his army of six thousand men, reaching the outskirts of Monterrey on Sept. 17th. The Mexican Army with a force of seven thousand men under the command of Gen. Ampudia were entrenched and ready to defend the city.

The road to Monterrey from the West was selected by Gen. Taylor as the best avenue of approach in attacking the city. However he found this route was guarded by two natural gateposts, called Federation Hill and Independence Hill. On Federation Hill stood Fort Soldado. On Independence Hill stood the impressive stone edifice known as the Bishops Palace. Both were heavily fortified and Gen. Ampudia had placed several batteries of effective artillery on each to command the approach to the city from the west. On Sept. 20th, Gen. Taylor dispatched Gen. Worth with 2000 men plus Col. Hays force of 250 Texans to remove these obstacles. Hays and his men took Federation Hill and Fort Soldado on Sept. 21st with Capt. Gillespie being one of the first into the fort. The next day, Capt. Hays and Col. Childs, with a total of 465 men moved to take Independence Hill and the Bishops Palace. In the predawn hours they scaled the 800 foot high hill and were in place to attack the Bishops Palace at the first light of dawn. When the signal was given to attack, Capt. Gillespie was in the lead with his company. He was first to scale the rampart and first to receive the enemy fire. It was here on Independence Hill, Sept. 22, 1846, that Robert Addison Gillespie received his final wound.

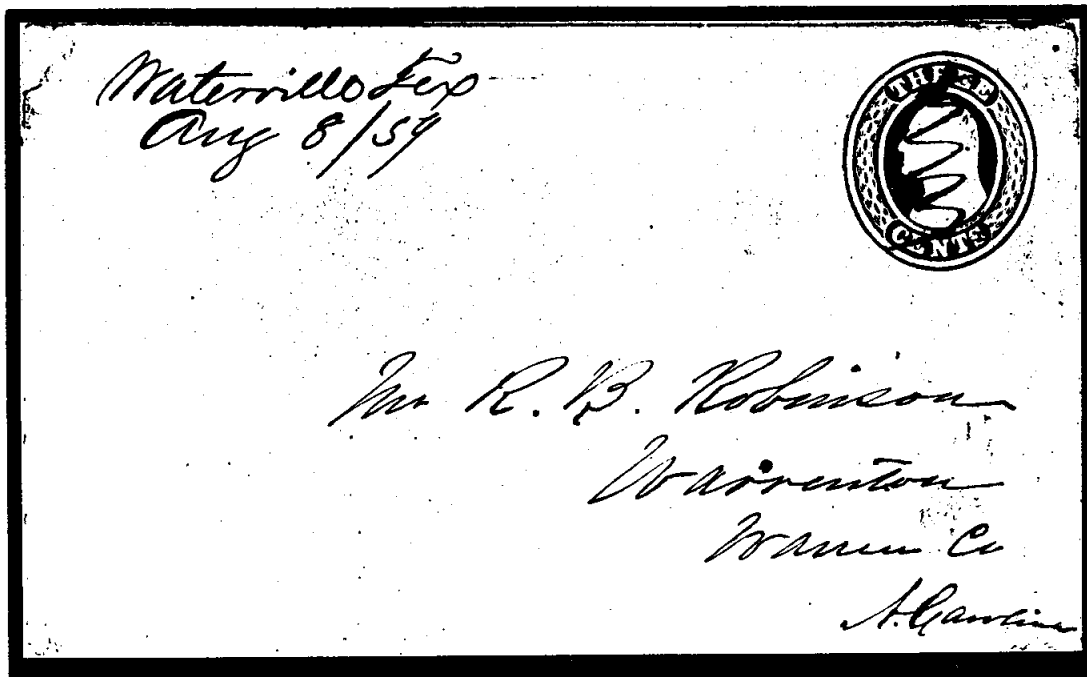
His bravery, dedication and continuing efforts to protect his adopted state won for him the appreciation and fame he so richly deserved.

Excerpt from  
THE POSTAL HISTORY OF WHARTON COUNTY

by Norma Watz

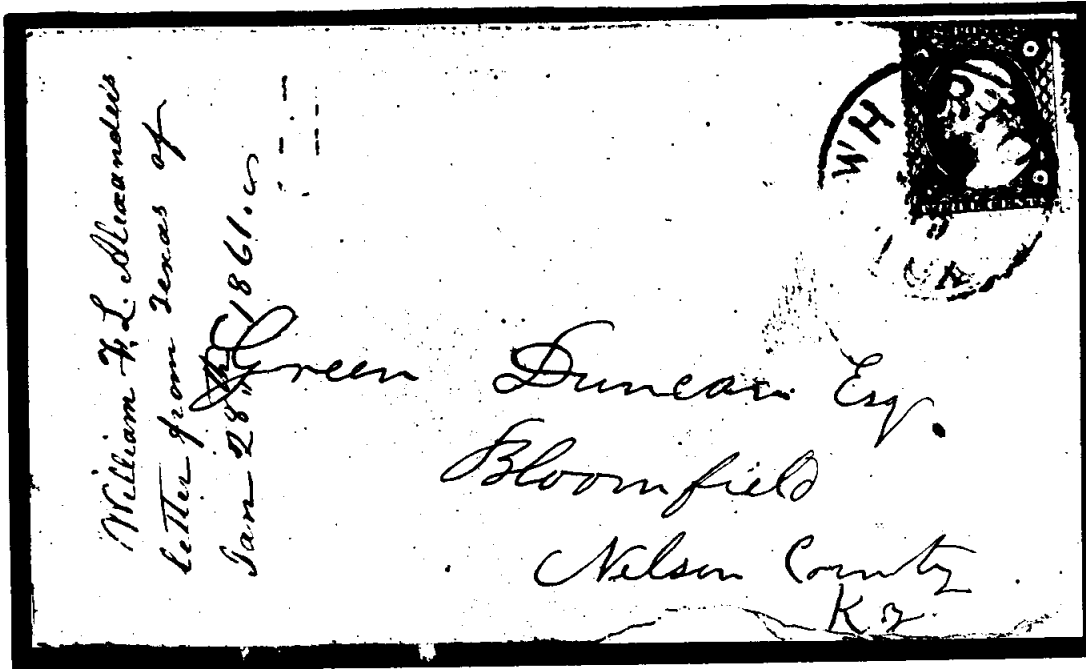
Evidence that there were enough families to create a need for postal service is shown in the re-establishment of a post office at Waterville in February, 1872, with P.H. Pettey appointed as Postmaster. Jack Phillips followed him and Shadrach M. Rowe took over the duties in 1877.

It was in the late 1870's that the population moved still farther north and east, and eventually the community was to become known as Iago. Cover from Waterville (see illustration) is Scott U1 on diagonally laid paper, watermark of the first variety. Cancellation was made August 8, 1859 by Postmaster William H. Albertson, the second Postmaster of Waterville.



Wharton, formerly Peach Creek, had Gabriele Eagan for its first Postmaster, his appointment being July 1, 1847. Eagan was 37 years old, a native of Tennessee, who also served as County Clerk and Justice of the Peace. Wharton cover (see illustration) bearing Scott 26, Type II was cancelled January 29, 1861, at which time Charles S. Betts was serving as Wharton's second Postmaster. Letter is from W.F.S. Alexander, a native of Virginia, who established a large plantation south of Wharton which he

named "Bear Camp." It covered 1,090 acres, extending from the heart of the present town of Boling, to the Needville Highway. The Alexander residence was equipped with a fine library, billiard hall and large areas for entertaining. The 1850 Census lists Alexander as being 26 years old and owning 94 slaves.



About 16,784 acres of "peach and cane" land were in cultivation in 1850. Large plantations with many slaves were the rule rather than the exception, and both white and black people lived in the resplendent manner of ante-bellum days throughout the South. During the Civil War, times were very difficult. Anxiety about the possible invasion of Northern forces at Matagorda concerned the Commissioners Court to the extent that, on June 17, 1861, the court agreed on an appropriation for coastal defense. The Court also appropriated funds to purchase tents, uniforms, baggage, wagons, horses, guns and pistols.

In 1861, a barrel of sugar cost \$125; cotton sold for 10¢ a pound; coffee, flour and store clothing were high beyond reason. By August, 1862, many families were destitute and the Court ordered \$100 appropriated to each of those families with a husband and father in the Army. Letter from Callie Wright, June 11, 1865, outlines the hard times and the sentiments of many citizens.

The aftermath of the Civil War caused some of Wharton County's most turbulent years, both economically and politically. When the slaves were freed, many large plantations closed, some never to reopen as such. Two major factors influenced the rebuilding of Wharton County at this time. First, when the large plantation diminished, the door opened for numerous immigrants, who came into the area buying land to establish themselves as farmers, raising potatoes and cotton. Many immigrants came from Europe, where revolutions due to economic and political conditions were experienced, entering Texas through the Port of Galveston, first established as a provisional port and customs entry point by Act of Congress of Mexico on October 17, 1825. Second, the needed railroads finally arrived.

The town of Wharton grew very little until the New York, Texas and Mexican Railway arrived in 1881. To its East, after a bridge was built across the Bernard River, the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad began services with a depot given the name of Bernard Station, where a Post Office was established. Frank Priestly was appointed Postmaster August 3, 1866. The community was later to be known as East Bernard, where the Post Office is still active.

The railroads influenced the naming of two communities and the name-changing of one, Quinan, which settlers had so named in honor of Judge George Quinan (pronounced Quinine). Born in Ireland in 1819, Quinan settled near Wharton as a lawyer and was elected to the Texas Senate in 1857. When the New York, Texas and Mexican Railway was built through Quinan, the name was changed to Hungerford, in honor of the President of the railroad, Daniel Hungerford. Farther along the tracks, Louise was thus named to honor the daughter of Daniel Hungerford, while Mackay was chosen to honor John William Mackay, son-in-law of the President of the railroad.

Preston, Egypt, Wharton and Waterville were established as U.S. Post Offices between 1846 and 1859. Of these, Wharton and Egypt remain active. Bernard Station was the first post office to be established after the first railroad emerged in the County in 1866.

Of 20 post offices established along railways, 10 remain active to date, whereas only 1 out of 10 remains active in the group established away from railway lines, or to which a line was never completed. In the list below, \* indicates those still active:

ON RAILWAY LINE

Bernard Station  
East Bernard \*  
Quinan  
Hungerford \*  
Spanish Camp  
New Philadelphia  
Lissie \*  
Mackay  
Pierce Station  
Pierce \*  
Louise \*  
El Campo \*  
Iago  
Sorella  
Bonus  
Kriegel  
Nottawa  
Burr  
Glen Flora \*  
Hillje  
Arnim  
Lane City \*  
Magnet  
Boling \*  
Newgulf \*

OFF RAILWAY LINE

Round Mott  
Tait  
Taiton  
Goldenrod  
Colburn  
Danevang \*  
Lost Prong  
Pocket  
Hahn  
Sandies  
Nedra

The lives of the Postmasters and their families were an integral part of the communities, where they often served as County Officials in addition to being business and professional men. Dr. A.L. Lincecum, El Campo Postmaster, served as mayor, postmaster, physician, and also established a hospital. Most lived happy, productive lives; however, the fate of Hope Adams, telegraph operator, who became Postmaster of New Philadelphia May 23, 1888, was an exception. He changed the name to "Lissie" in dual honor of his daughter and Melissa Leveridge, the first school teacher. Adams entered the race for Sheriff on an independent ticket, openly opposing the established White Man's Association. He was shot and killed by unknown persons on the public square in Wharton on October 20, 1898. The bullets were fired from an upstairs window of the Courthouse. No charges were ever filed.

(to be continued)

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