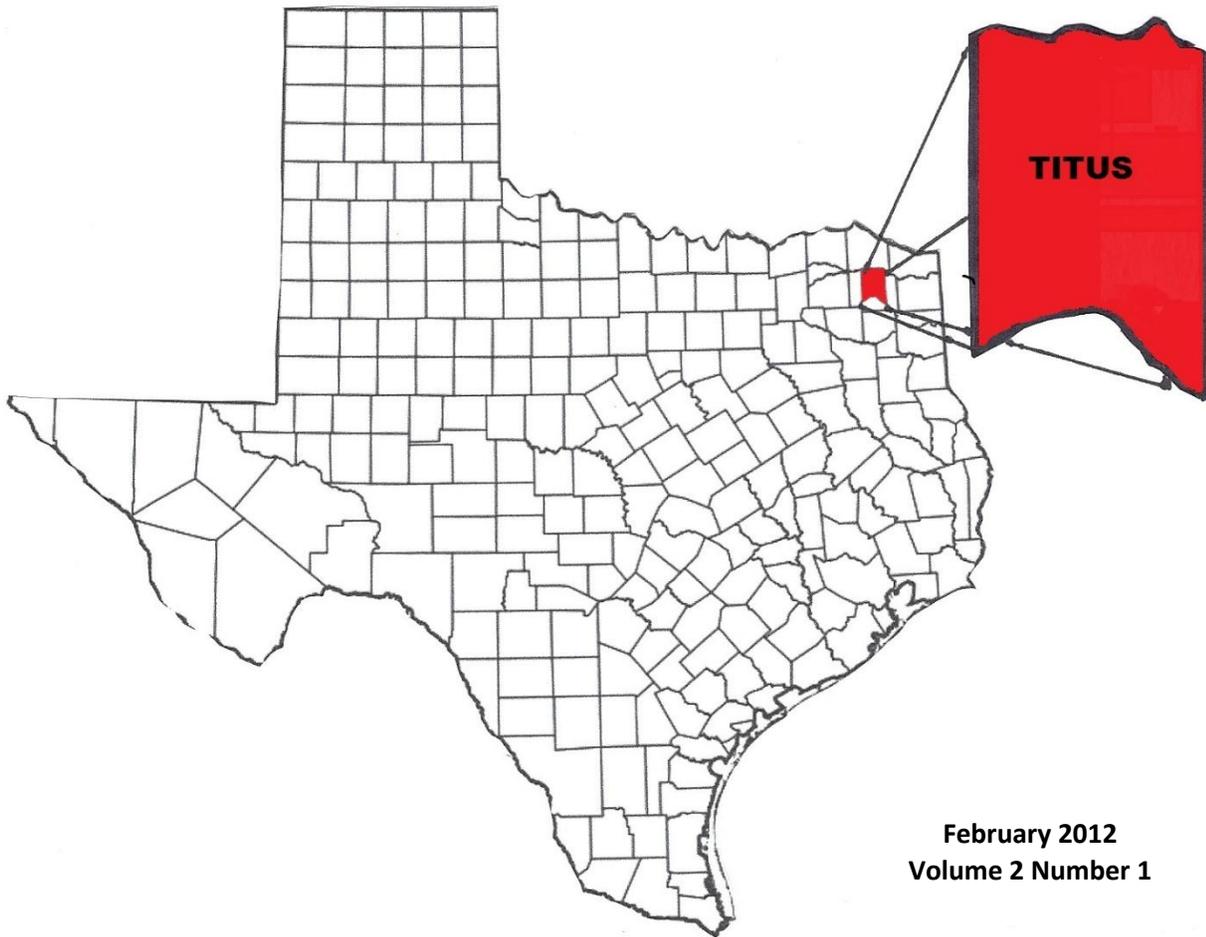


Titus County Generations

*Where the past connects with the present and
influences the future*



February 2012
Volume 2 Number 1

Titus County Genealogical Society

P. O. Box 403
Mt. Pleasant, TX 75455
www.titusgen.org

Titus County Genealogical Society Officers

President	Michael Thompson
Vice President	John Martin
Secretary	Earnestine Hess
Treasurer	Kathryne Evers
Researcher	O. C. Hill
Editor	Jean Martin

A Word from Our President

This is the fourth issue of our newsletter since Jean Martin became the editor and resurrected it. Her article on Oak Grove Spring is very interesting. I know you will enjoy reading it.

The work of our society continues to show promise. Our association with the library continues to sweeten. New members and old friends continue to surface. We are looking forward to the opening of the new library now scheduled for March.

At our last meeting we had Francis Ellsworth come and share with us news of the 1940 US Census. There are many who excitingly wait for its official release April 2 of this year. Francis is involved with a group that is part of an effort to index this work, so that people can find the important data provided in the census more easily. At least one of our members is interested in being involved in this indexing project. If you are interested, please let us know, so that we can get you connected to this work as well.

We were planning to have our February meeting at the new library. Since the move-in date has been moved to March, our February meeting will be at our normal location in Mr. Foster's building. Join us at 2PM, February 9.

The Oak Grove Spring

In 1870, S. P. Crawford sold his property in Batesville, Arkansas to join the many pioneers immigrating to Texas. He loaded his family and their possessions in a covered wagon and began the journey. After crossing the Red River into Texas he evidently embarked on the Old Clarksville Road which ran from Clarksville, Texas, to Snow Hill, Texas. He ended his journey at a community named Oak Grove in Titus County. He bought land from Alex Cobb and built the first plank house in the community on the west side of the road. At that time all the other houses were hewn from logs.*

As there was no school or church, he and Mr. Cobb donated land for a school. They and their neighbors then built a one-room schoolhouse. Crawford's wife, Gartha Ann (Gilpin), was already a teacher so she became the first teacher of Oak Grove School in 1870. She was paid \$25.00 a month for her services. Later, in 1892, Mrs. Birdie Crawford Eskew, the Crawford's daughter, became the teacher. Oak Grove School remained an active school until 1959 when it consolidated with Nevil's Chapel School to form the Harts Bluff School District.* This school remains active with an enrollment of over 400 students in grades Pre-K-8th.

One family in the neighborhood at the time was the Rounsavalls, upon whose land the Oak Grove Spring was located. Mr. Rounsavall kept the spring open for all travelers on the Old Clarksville Road to use. Other families in the neighborhood were the Watkins, Porters, Coveys, Wilhites, Dr. Mathews, Ed Cox, the Morgans, Gingles, Blackwells, and others.* Many of these names are still well known in the area.

The spring was a source of water for the Oak Grove School. It also supplied water for the freight wagons and cattle drives on their way to connect with the Old Jefferson Road at Snow Hill, Texas, which no longer exists, outside of Mt. Pleasant, Texas. They could follow the Old Jefferson Road to Jefferson, Texas, to load their merchandise on steamboats heading to New Orleans. The freight wagons could also

return to Clarksville with merchandise to supply settlers in that area. The Jefferson Road also made a westward track toward the Denton/Sherman area. In much earlier times Indians using the Old Clarksville Road, which was part of the Cherokee and Choctaw Traces, placed hollow logs in the spring to allow the water to collect for easier use.**

In the 1950's when Edd Martin, my father-in-law, moved his family to the Oak Grove community, a well tile was used to allow the water to collect for easier use. Periodically, he and some of the neighbors would use post-hole diggers to clean the sand from the bottom of the tile so that the spring was about 4 feet deep.

Later he and his family moved over to the Harts Bluff Road and bought a house next to the grocery store he had bought from Harold Barrow. The Barrow family was another old family from the community. Mr. Joe Barrow, his brother, once told John Martin about the cattle drives that stopped by the spring and that his father would help break horses for the cowboys while they were camped there. Mr. Joe was one of the two teachers in the 1st-8th grade Oak Grove School in the 1950's when John was a student.

When the Martin family relocated to the Harts Bluff Road there was no "city" water for people living outside of Mt. Pleasant. The Martin's well did not have drinkable water so they hauled water in gallon jugs from the Oak Grove Spring. After John and I married in 1965, I remember going to the spring and filling jugs of water for John's mother to use for cooking and drinking. *I guess we were pioneers in the bottled water industry but were unaware of the fortune that is made by that industry today.* In the summers when we were hauling hay for John's dad we always stopped by the spring, if it was on our way, for a good cold drink of spring water.

During the drought of the 1950's--comparable to the 2011 drought--the spring supplied the citizens of this part of the county with water for home and stock use. Since most of the wells and stock ponds had dried up people were desperate for water. The Porters, Miss Kitt, Cull, and Ernest, whose mother was a Rounsavall always kept

access to the spring open to anyone who needed it just as their grandfather had so many years before. Luvern Martin, my mother-in-law, told me that the road going by the spring would be lined with trucks, cars, and wagons as people filled barrels with water from the spring. They would drain the spring dry and within 5 minutes it had recovered to its full capacity.

Sadly, after so many years of providing water to all who needed it, the water from the Oak Grove Spring is no longer safe to drink. As people moved to the "country" and built new homes around the area of the spring, drainage from their septic systems contaminated the water. Dr. John Ellis had the water tested several years ago after a patient, who still hauled water from the spring, had symptoms that suggested he was drinking contaminated water. It is still there and running as well as always. I wonder if on moonlit nights, one can see the ghosts of the Indians, pioneers, teamsters, and cowboys as they stopped on their journeys along the Old Clarksville Road.

*This information was found in The History of Titus County Schools, Oak Grove School District #10 (white) by Lynch Harper.

**saltillotexas.homestead.com

--Jean Martin

I hope you enjoyed reading this article about the Oak Grove Spring as much as I enjoyed researching and writing about it. I'd like to share this quote one of my fellow genealogists shared with me the other day, "Old genealogists never die; they just lose their census."