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**JOHN B. DENTON, PIONEER PREACHER-LAWYER-SOLDIER**

by John Denton Carter

John Bunyan Denton, pioneer Texas leader for whom the county and city of Denton were named, earned wide acclaim during his lifetime as a forceful and picturesque figure, an eloquent orator, and a many-sided man who made his mark as a Methodist preacher, lawyer, and soldier on the north Texas frontier.<sup>1</sup> A native of Tennessee, Denton lived most of his life in the Arkansas Territory and his last four years in the Republic of Texas. Much of the fame that survives him rests largely on his death in the Indian wars, an event that helped to open up the north Texas prairie to agricultural settlement. Five years after his death in 1841, the grateful people of Texas gave his name to one of the new counties carved out of the wilderness which today supports a population of several million centered on the great cities of Dallas and Fort Worth.

Born in Tennessee on July 28, 1806, Denton lost his parents when he was eight years old and was apprenticed with his older brother William to Jacob Wells, a blacksmith. Both Denton's father and Jacob Wells were Methodist preachers, probably part-time local preachers, a very important element in the spread of Methodism on the frontier. Soon after the death of Denton's parents, near the end of the War of 1812 when many settlers were rushing into the newly opened lands to the west, Jacob Wells moved with his family and the Denton children from Tennessee to Indiana, and from thence to Clark County, Arkansas Territory, where John B. Denton lived most of his Arkansas years.<sup>2</sup>

Clark County lies along the Ouachita River in southwest Arkansas. The present county seat, the university city of Arkadelphia, developed in time along the west bank of the river, but when the Wells and Dentons arrived in the county there was no settlement that could be described as a town or even a village. The inhabitants were scattered along the streams in small communities or on isolated farms. Some large slaveowners moved into Clark County with their slaves in the early period, but most of the settlers made their living as subsistence farmers, hunters, trappers, and fishermen. Wild life was abundant and provided a major source of food as well as a profitable trade in furs and hides.<sup>3</sup>

Jacob Wells became one of the leading citizens of Clark County and of the Arkansas Territory. He arrived in the county with his family and the Denton children some time before 1819, the year in which his name appears in the records as a member of both the grand and petit juries.<sup>4</sup> In 1824 he was commissioned a colonel by the territorial governor and given command of the First Regiment of the Arkansas Territorial Militia. John B. Denton's brother William was commissioned a second lieutenant in the regiment.<sup>5</sup> When Arkansas was admitted to the union in 1836, Jacob Wells became the first county treasurer of Clark County under statehood.<sup>6</sup>

Some of the accounts of John B. Denton's boyhood days in Arkansas, based on distorted source material, suggest that Denton was reared not only in poverty-stricken but even "degraded" circumstances, but all of the reliable evidence portrays Wells as a man of character and substance, a prosperous farmer, blacksmith, and public servant.<sup>7</sup> However, there was one unfortunate situation in the Wells household that made life difficult for Denton. Both John and his older brother William had been apprenticed to Wells to learn the blacksmith trade, but it appears that John, not yet in his teens, was considered

too young to work at the forge and was made to help Mrs. Wells with the house work until he grew older. John could not get along with Mrs. Wells—could not abide her “unbearable scolding,” according to one of Denton’s sons—and he left the Wells home at the age of twelve to work as a deckhand on a flatboat on the Arkansas River.<sup>8</sup> No doubt there was reconciliation later, because John returned to Clark County to marry and settle down in the same community in which his brother William, Jacob Wells, and other members of the Wells family lived.<sup>9</sup>

At the age of eighteen John B. Denton married sixteen-year-old Mary Greenlee Stewart, a native of Bossier Parish, Louisiana, who, according to some accounts, taught him to read and write.<sup>10</sup> Six children were born to the Dentons between 1826 and 1840. At the time of his marriage it can be assumed that the ambitious young Denton began to think more seriously of a career beyond that of a landless subsistence farmer. He was a man possessed of much native intelligence, although no formal education. He had strong religious convictions based on the teachings of his preacher-father—who had named him after the great religious mystic, John Bunyan—and of the Methodist missionaries who were active in the Ouachita area at an early period. At this time, too, John must have discovered his unusual talent as an orator which was to serve him well later in the pulpit and the courtroom.

In 1826, two years after his marriage, John B. Denton made the decision to enter the Methodist ministry.<sup>11</sup> For some years, however, he remained in Clark County as a local preacher performing voluntary services at Methodist meetings in his own area while supporting himself and family by other means. During these formative years Denton came under the influence of Rev. William Stevenson, one of the founders of Arkansas Methodism, and other early pioneer preachers and laymen who had established a flourishing center of Methodist activity at the farming community of Mound Prairie, located in Hempstead County about fifty miles southwest of the Ouachita settlements in Clark County. Here at Mound Prairie a group of Methodists and others, led by Stevenson, had migrated from Missouri to form one of the more prosperous communities in the territory. Here, too, the first Methodist church building in Arkansas, a log cabin, was constructed in 1817; and from here, under the leadership of Stevenson and his associates and successors, the Methodist preaching circuits widened and the number of preaching places increased in southern Arkansas, in the Choctaw Nation, and in the American settlements in northeast Texas between the Red and Sulphur Fork rivers.<sup>12</sup>

The circuit riders of travelling preachers from Mound Prairie found a fertile ground for the spread of Methodism in the Ouachita settlements in Clark County which William Stevenson had visited on a preaching mission from Missouri as early as 1814, several years before the Wells and Denton families arrived in the county. As Stevenson and his successors at Mound Prairie expanded their activities into the Ouachita settlements, they brought into their circle the forceful, eloquent, and enthusiastic young local preacher, John B. Denton, who, even in his youthful ministry, wrote Rev. William Allen, the Denton biographer, had “power, grace, and eloquence.”<sup>13</sup>

In 1833 Denton decided to join formally the Missouri Conference of the Methodist Church (which then had jurisdiction over Arkansas Territory) and to give full time to the missionary work of the church in the southwest. He was admitted to the conference on trial at the annual meeting which assembled at Salem Camp Ground near Cane Hill, Washington County, Arkansas Territory,

on September 4, 1833. Denton was assigned, with one other preacher, to the Mound Prairie Circuit for the coming year.<sup>14</sup> By this time Mound Prairie was no longer the primary center of Methodist activity it had been in the past—its zenith has been reached in the 1820-1825 period—but was only one of nineteen circuits, or pastoral appointments, in the Arkansas Territory.<sup>15</sup>

Denton's first venture into the full-time ministry lasted for only a year, that is, from the fall of 1833 to the fall of 1834. The conference minutes for the 1834 meeting do not list Denton as a conference member, and, in fact, he remained out of the conference for three years.<sup>16</sup> While there is no record of why Denton dropped out of the active ministry at the time, undoubtedly the primary reason was that he had difficulty making a living for his growing family, a difficulty that was to force him out of the ministry permanently after he moved to Texas. No doubt, too, he was not happy over the requirement that he be separated from his wife and small children over long periods as he rode the circuit. It was Bishop Francis Asbury's opinion that bachelorhood was the ideal condition for a Methodist circuit rider on the frontier; and Denton's experiences seem to bear this out.<sup>17</sup> After his one year on the circuit, Denton returned to Clark County where, in Methodist parlance, he "located," that is, assumed the status of a local preacher performing part-time duties in the community while making a living in other ways.

One result of Denton's appointment to the Mound Prairie Circuit was that it brought him into direct contact with the Texas fever, or "Texas mania," defined by a preacher in Missouri as "the General rage in every quarter to Move to Texas." In Hempstead County in 1824 "movers were passing nearly every day going west" to the Mexican province of Texas.<sup>18</sup> The Mound Prairie community was located only a few miles from the town of Washington, then the county seat of Hempstead County and the very center of this steady migration. In fact, Washington and the surrounding area formed a sort of staging point for the final leg of the journey into northeast Texas. Here the migrants were able to obtain the supplies that would be needed until they reached their destinations in Texas, to have their horses shod and rested and their wagons repaired. Among the famous men who passed through this area and remained for awhile on their way to Texas were Stephen F. Austin and James Bowie. Austin became a friend and correspondent of Rev. William Stevenson, visited in the Stevenson home, and left some of his baggage in Stevenson's care when he departed for Texas.<sup>19</sup>

As John B. Denton rode the Mound Prairie Circuit into southwest Arkansas during the year 1833-1834, he had occasion more than once to cross the Red River and preach to the American settlers in Texas.<sup>20</sup> He was not the first Methodist preacher to do this; in fact, William Stevenson had preached at Pecan Point on the Texas side of the Red River as early as 1815, according to his autobiography.<sup>21</sup> It is probable that Denton considered northeast Texas to be within his bailiwick, because Arkansas then claimed all of the region lying between the Red and Sulphur Fork rivers and has organized the area as Miller County, with the county seat at Pecan Point.<sup>22</sup>

The Texas fever did not take hold of Denton at this stage of his career, that is, during his year on the Mound Prairie Circuit. Three years later, at the annual meeting of the Arkansas Conference at Little Rock on November 1, 1837, he was readmitted *in absentia* to the conference and was assigned, probably on his own initiative, to the Sulphur Fork Circuit in northeast Texas.<sup>23</sup> But before he reentered the conference and received his Texas appointment, he was presented in September of that year with the opportunity for a long trip into Texas extending over several months as the travelling companion of Rev. Littleton

Fowler, a member of the Tennessee Conference who had been sent to Texas by the Methodist Board of Foreign Missions at New York. Fowler and Denton crossed the Red River into Texas at the end of September, 1837. The trip is described in Rev. Fowler's journal:

In Arkansas, I engaged John B. Denton, a local preacher, to accompany me to Texas to work in the missionary field. . . We held a camp-meeting near Clarksville, Red River County, near the first of October. From Clarksville, in the protecting company of three others, we two, with provisions for four days packed on our horses, struck out across Texas for Nacogdoches. We slept in the forest four nights, and arrived at Nacogdoches on October 16, 1837, and preached two sermons. . .

October 19th we reached San Augustine and preached four nights in succession. There I began a subscription for building a church. In less than two weeks a lot was deeded, \$3500 was subscribed, trustees were appointed, and the building was under written contract to be finished before the first of next September. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."<sup>24</sup>

In November 1837 Littleton Fowler departed San Augustine for a visit to Houston, then the capital city, and left Denton temporarily in charge of the work in the San Augustine-Nacogdoches area. Fowler's main purpose was to establish churches in the major centers of population to the south. In Washington-on-the-Brazos, the original capital, he was given the deed to a large lot for the construction of a church; and in Houston, then a town of 800, a generous donor gave half a block near the capitol to the church which was to become the center of Methodism in the area for many years.<sup>25</sup>

In the meantime, back in San Augustine, John B. Denton was becoming quite concerned over rumors that both Littleton Fowler and Robert Alexander, another Methodist missionary, were speculating in land. In a letter of November 15, 1837, from San Augustine, Denton wrote to Fowler, then in Houston, asking for some assurance that the rumors were false, else he was quite willing to forfeit the Fowler friendship and leave the mission.<sup>26</sup> As a matter of fact, he did soon leave the mission and return to Mound Prairie, more because of his longing for his family and his desire to reenter the regular pastorate, rather than his disappointment in Rev. Fowler.<sup>27</sup>

The next letter from Denton to Fowler, dated February 15, 1838, was written from the Choctaw Nation where the Methodists maintained a mission near present Idabel, Oklahoma. Denton informed Fowler that he had arrived home safely and "was permitted to see my dear family [then amounting to his wife and five children] & found them in the enjoyment of good health; for all of these blessings I am thankful to our common Parent." While happy about his family, Denton was not so sanguine about the state of religion in Mound Prairie, once the very flower of Arkansas Methodism. He wrote:

The state of religion in Hempstead is anything else than very favorable. The love of many is truly waxed *cold*, others have *backslidden* & so our Divine Master has suffered in the house of his friends.

O that the Great Head of the Church may revive a zeal according knowledge in the bosom of his *ministers* & the *laity*.

Upon his return to Hempstead County early in 1838, Denton learned for the first time that he had been appointed, back in November 1837, to the Sulphur Fork Circuit in northeast Texas.<sup>28</sup> He could not have been too surprised, because he had probably arranged with the presiding elder to return to the full-time ministry provided he were given an appointment in Texas. He had gotten the Texas fever at last, and, as was the case of so many others, had seen in his mind's eye an opportunity to leave behind the frustrations of the past, in which he had never been able to provide his family with more than the bare necessities of life, and to envision a new and more prosperous life in the fabulous Republic of Texas. In many ways his dreams came true, although he had the misfortune to be cut down in battle just as he seemed on the threshold of realizing his fondest expectations.

To the letter of February 15, written to Fowler from the Choctaw Nation, Denton added a postscript four days later informing his friend that he had crossed into Texas and was staying with one of his Methodist brethren on the Sulphur Fork where the first quarterly conference of Denton's pastorate was held.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, Denton's colleague or co-pastor, Rev. E.B. Duncan, had not been able to report for duty but was seriously ill back in Tennessee. An even greater difficulty was that Denton could not bring his family with him but was forced to leave them in Arkansas for the time being while he made arrangements to provide food and lodging in Texas. Eventually, he was able to move them to Clarksville.

Denton again wrote his friend, Littleton Fowler, on March 29, 1838, in part to apologize for suspecting Fowler of speculating in land, and in part to report on his work on Sulphur Fork Circuit. By this time, he had made three rounds of his circuit, and while he had found it "all unorganized," he was nevertheless cheered by the reception of the people who were "anxious for preaching." Two days earlier he had "preached to a very attentive and serious congregation," with one conversion and four new members brought into the society; the following day five new members joined. The most encouraging news that Denton had to offer was that he had under way an arrangement for building a church in Clarksville, and that he had pledges for four or five hundred dollars with prospects for more.<sup>30</sup>

In spite of some successes here and there, Denton still found, after a year of hard work, that he had not been able to raise himself and family above the bare subsistence level. His dreams of improving his position in Texas had not materialized, nor could he see a chance for betterment as long as he remained in the ministry. It was under these circumstances that he grasped the opportunity to study law and to enter the legal profession. He was influenced strongly by a local Methodist preacher, John B. Craig, who had opened a law office in Clarksville. Denton began reading law in Craig's office, but even before this, he revealed in his March 29 letter to Fowler, he had been seriously considering a legal career and had purchased a small library of law books. He seemed to be almost apologetic to Fowler and told of his worry over whether he could practice law "in accordance with the spirit of the gospel." Nevertheless, he made the decision, before the next annual conference met in the fall of 1838, to give up his pastoral work and to form a law partnership with John B. Craig in Clarksville. He reverted to the status of a local preacher and preached occasionally as he rode the law circuit.<sup>31</sup>

John B. Denton prospered in the law. His oratorical talents, force of character, and mental acuity served him well in the courtroom as they had in the pulpit. Denton rode the law circuit back and forth across north Texas in his

practice before the district court, while his law partner, John B. Craig, an older man, stayed home and took care of the local business. Denton entered politics as a candidate for the Texas Senate in the 1840 election, but was defeated by the well-known Robert Potter, a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence and the first secretary of the navy of the Texas Republic.<sup>32</sup>

As was true of so many Protestant ministers in the early Texas period, John B. Denton took an active interest in the Masonic Lodge. When he arrived in Texas he associated himself with the lodge at De Kalb in Bowie County which was within his Sulphur Fork Circuit. As he travelled his preaching circuit during his first year in Texas, and his law circuit after 1838, he kept in close touch with his Masonic brothers, occasionally speaking before lodge meetings or assisting in the installation of new lodges. While in Fannin County on court business he participated in the organization of Constantine Lodge No. 13 in Fort Warren on the Red River on November 3, 1840. This lodge continues today in the city of Bonham, county seat of Fannin County, and its records contain an account of Denton's participation in the birth of the lodge. The first senior warden of the lodge was James Slater Baker, district clerk of the county, one of whose sons would later marry Denton's oldest daughter.<sup>33</sup>

Following the disbandment of the Texas army after San Jacinto, the Republic was largely dependent for the defense of its borders on volunteers, a few ranger companies controlled by the central government, and locally controlled militia units sometimes known as ranger companies.<sup>34</sup> The officers of the militia units came from various backgrounds, but the most numerous were politicians and lawyers who combined the practice of law—and often farming and land speculation—with their political and military services. Among the outstanding military figures in north Texas during the period of the Republic were such lawyers as Edward H. Tarrant, William C. Young, and William H. Bourland, all of whom held political office at one time or another.<sup>35</sup> As was expected of a patriotic, vigorous, and ambitious young lawyer-politician, John B. Denton joined this group and was commissioned captain of a company in Brig. Gen. Edward H. Tarrant's Fourth Brigade, Texas Militia.

Denton's commission came at a time when his services, as well as those of every other able-bodied citizen on the north Texas frontier, were badly needed. Indian raids on isolated farms and settlements had been increasing and had reached even into Bowie County in the extreme northeast corner of the Republic. In April 1841 the raiders staged a gruesome attack on the Ripley family in an area south of Clarksville that later became part of Titus County. While the father was away, a party of Indians attacked the Ripley home, shot to death Mrs. Ripley and her grown son and oldest daughter, and clubbed to death several of the younger children.<sup>36</sup> The outraged settlers demanded retaliation, leading to the organization of an expeditionary force under Gen. Tarrant charged with locating and destroying the Indian base of operations which was known to be a group of villages lying in the vicinity of present Fort Worth.

In response to a call for volunteers, a force of approximately seventy mounted troops assembled on the Red River in Fannin County, proceeded to abandoned Fort Johnson near present Denison, and on May 14, 1841, struck out in a southwesterly direction toward the area in which the Indian villages were reported to be located. The Tarrant force had Capt. James Bourland as company commander with Lt. William C. Young second in command. Capts. John B. Denton and Henry Stout served as aides to Gen. Tarrant, with each placed in charge of a small detachment of scouts.

After a ten-day march the Tarrant force came upon the main body of Indians encamped in a group of villages along Village Creek at a point where the creek now intersects Highway 80 immediately east of the present limits of Fort Worth. Two of the villages were taken with little or no opposition, but on the approaches to a third village the invaders were met with gunfire and were forced to fall back and regroup near the second village. From here, Capt. Denton and Capt. Bourland were sent out with small scouting forces with instructions to scour the woods and to meet at a designated point a mile and a half in the direction of the third village, from whence they were ordered to report back to camp. But at the rendezvous point a trail was found leading down into the creek bottom toward the main Indian encampment. Disregarding instructions to avoid an ambush, a detachment, led by Denton and Stout, spurred their horses forward along the trail in order to obtain a better view of the Indian encampment. At a bend in the creek they were fired upon by the Indians waiting under cover. Denton was killed instantly, Henry Stout was badly wounded, and Capt. John F. Griffin was wounded slightly. The attack in which Denton was killed occurred on May 24, 1841. The startled scouts pulled back quickly and, in some disarray, returned to the main camp. The most immediate concern was to recover Denton's body, which was accomplished by Capt. Bourland with a force of twenty-four men. Before the day was out the expedition was on its way back to Fannin County, taking a considerable amount of ammunition and other loot and a number of horses. General Tarrant had learned from captives that the Indian villages could muster a maximum force of a thousand men, and that about half that number were in camp at the time.<sup>37</sup>

As the Tarrant men crossed the area later organized as Denton County, they buried John B. Denton in a marked grave on an embankment overlooking Oliver Creek near its junction with Denton Creek. Present at the burial service were a number of men well-known in Texas history, including two, Edward H. Tarrant and William C. Young, for whom Texas counties were named. Others were the Bourland's, James and William H., both later members of the Texas legislature; Claibourne Chisum, father of John S. Chisum of Chisum trail fame; Henry Stout, great hunter and fighter who had migrated to Texas during the Spanish period; and Andrew J. Davis, later a prominent Methodist minister who wrote an account of the Tarrant expedition and the fight at Village Creek. In 1860 Denton's remains were found by John S. Chisum and removed to the Chisum ranch home near Bolivar in Denton County. The remains were again disinterred in 1901 and reburied on the courthouse lawn at Denton. A monument was placed over the Denton grave during the Texas centennial in 1936.<sup>38</sup>

John B. Denton's death aroused strong emotions in the north Texas community, with grief for the fallen hero mixed with anger and the urge to retaliate at the first opportunity. Within the next several months, two expeditions were sent against the Indian villages. A second Tarrant expedition, of 400 to 500 volunteers, assembled at Fort English near present Bonham in July 1841. The other force, organized as the Third Brigade, Texas Militia, started from the Nacogdoches area under the command of Brig. Gen. James Smith. Neither of these two forces was able to find the Indians, who had fled the villages as the enemy approached.<sup>39</sup> One immediate result of the 1841 campaign was to transfer the border war zone farther to the west. More important in the long run, the rich north central Texas prairie was opened to agricultural development.

John B. Denton was endowed with many of those qualities associated with leadership, combined with a versatility found in few public men. He was articulate, intelligent, forceful, and ambitious. He had an attractive personality

and a sense of integrity and high purpose that earned him the friendship and respect of the best minds among his Arkansas and Texas contemporaries in the church and in public life. After some years of poverty and frustration, he seemed to have found himself when he moved to Texas. He was the first Methodist preacher to give full time to the work of the church in northeast Texas, and may justly be described as a founder of organized Methodism in the area. In an entirely different field, he was one of a group of pioneer north Texas lawyers who, as officers of the district and county courts, worked to establish a system of justice among rough frontiersmen who were too often moved by violent passions rather than respect for the rule of law. In his final great service to the Texas Republic, Denton gave his life in a battle the repercussions of which would settle finally the conflict between encroaching settlers and the plains Indians for control of the north Texas prairie. Had he lived, John B. Denton would probably have gone far in the politics and public life of Texas. He was a man who seemed destined for power and place, but he passed on before he could realize his bounding ambitions. However, he achieved enough in his all-too-brief lifetime to have a Texas county and city named in his honor.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For many years Denton's middle name appeared in various publications as Bernard, but this error was corrected by Mrs. James William (Annie) Baker, widow of one of Denton's grandsons, in the *Denton Record-Chronicle* of February 3, 1957. John B. Denton, Jr., was known familiarly as "Bun" Denton, obviously a shortening of Bunyan.

<sup>2</sup>William Allen, *Captain John B. Denton, Preacher, Lawyer, and Soldier: His Life and Times in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Texas* (Chicago, 1905), 67-79.

<sup>3</sup>Mrs. Laura Scott Butler, "History of Clark County," *Arkansas Historical Association Publications*, I (1906), 362-394; II (1908), 553-579.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 371.

<sup>5</sup>Clarence E. Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, XX, *The Territory of Arkansas, 1825-1829* (Washington, 1953), 69.

<sup>6</sup>*Biographical and Pictorial Memoirs of Southern Arkansas* (Chicago, 1890), 117.

<sup>7</sup>Portrayal of the Jacob Wells family as "one of the most degraded families in Arkansas" is an example of the distortions introduced into the Denton biographical literature by Alfred W. Arrington in his frontier tales of the southwest. One of Arrington's stock characters was a young and eloquent preacher-lawyer named Paul Denton, obviously modelled after John B. Denton. Some of the fiction in the Paul Denton tales found its way into the various histories of Arkansas and Texas Methodism by simply changing the name of the hero to John B. Denton. The best account of Arrington's career and his fictional distortions of men and events is by Ted R. Worley, "The Story of Alfred W. Arrington," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, XV (Winter 1955), 316-339.

<sup>8</sup>Allen, *Capt. John B. Denton*, 80-84, 143-146.

<sup>9</sup>U.S. Fifth Census, 1830, Territory of Arkansas, Clark County, shows John and William Denton and several members of the Wells family as heads of families living in Caddo Township, Clark County.

<sup>10</sup>Allen, *Capt. John B. Denton*, 91, 146.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 96-98.

<sup>12</sup>Walter N. Vernon, *William Stevenson, Riding Preacher* (Dallas, 1964), 40-43; Walter N. Vernon, *Methodism in Arkansas, 1816-1976* (Little Rock, 1976), 18-22; Allen, *Capt. John B. Denton*, 88.

<sup>13</sup>Vernon, *Methodism in Arkansas*, 21; Allen, *Capt. John B. Denton*, 99-100.

<sup>14</sup>*Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1833-1840* (New York, 1840).

<sup>15</sup>Vernon, *Methodism in Arkansas*, 21.

<sup>16</sup>*Minutes of the Annual Conferences* for the years 1834-1836, inclusive.

<sup>17</sup>In early Methodism in America only single men were accepted as conference members. Bishop Francis Asbury, the greatest circuit rider of them all, remained a bachelor all of his life.

<sup>18</sup>Vernon, *Methodism in Arkansas*, 21-22, 29.

<sup>19</sup>Vernon, *Stevenson, Riding Preacher*, 48-50; Charlean Moss Williams, *Washington, Hempstead County, Arkansas-Gateway to Texas 1835, Confederate Capital 1863* (Houston, 1951).

<sup>20</sup>Macum Phelan, *A History of Early Methodism in Texas, 1817-1866* (Nashville, 1924), 178; Walter N. Vernon, *Methodism Moves Across North Texas* (Dallas, 1967), 39-40.

<sup>21</sup>Vernon, *Stevenson, Riding Preacher*, 42-43; and *Methodism Moves Across North Texas*, 19-20.

<sup>22</sup>Rex W. Strickland, "Miller County, Arkansas Territory; The Frontier That Men Forgot," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, XVIII (1940), 12-34, 154-170; XIX (1941), 37-54.

<sup>23</sup>*Minutes of the Annual Conferences*, 1837.

<sup>24</sup>Dora Fowler Arthur, "Jottings From the Old Journal of Littleton Fowler," *Texas State Historical Association Quarterly*, II (July 1898), 78; Laura Fowler Woolworth, comp. and ed., *Littleton Fowler, 1803-1846; A Missionary to the Republic of Texas, 1837-1846* (Shreveport, La., 1936), 21.

<sup>25</sup>Arthur, *Texas State Historical Association Quarterly*, II: 79-81.

<sup>26</sup>The Denton to Fowler letter of November 15, 1837, is the first of three such letters preserved in the Fowler Collection, Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University.

<sup>27</sup>Littleton Fowler, as Denton suspected, acquired a considerable amount of land in his early Texas years. The 1840 tax lists show that in Nacogdoches County he held full title to 8,302 acres, and in San Augustine County 4,428 acres. He owned town lots and other acreage in three other counties. Gifford White, ed., *The 1840 Census of the Republic of Texas* (Austin, 1966), 77, 88, 125, 165, 173.

<sup>28</sup>Denton to Fowler, February 15, 1838, Fowler Collection, Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University.

<sup>29</sup>Postscript dated February 19 to *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>Denton to Fowler, March 29, 1838, Fowler Collection.

<sup>31</sup>Allen, *Capt. John B. Denton*, 111-118.

<sup>32</sup>Ernest G. Fischer, *Robert Potter, Founder of the Texas Navy* (Gretna, La., 1976),

185.

<sup>88</sup>W.A. Barr, Secretary, Constantine Lodge No. 13, Bonham, Texas, to John D. Carter, March 7, 1960. The Constantine Lodge has maintained good records of its activities since the very beginning in 1840. The records include a history of the lodge written by one of the members.

<sup>84</sup>Joseph N. Heard, "Army of the Republic of Texas," in Walter P. Webb and H. Bailey Carroll, eds., *The Handbook of Texas*, 2 vols. (Austin, 1952) I:69-70; and Walter Prescott Webb, "Texas Rangers," in *Ibid.* II:755-756.

<sup>85</sup>Biographical sketches of these men appear in *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup>John Henry Brown, *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas* (Austin, 1892), 85.

<sup>87</sup>James T. De Shields, *Border Wars of Texas . . .* (Tioga, Texas, 1912), 353-359. This is the first account of the Village Creek fight to make use of the official report of Acting Brigade Inspector William N. Porter to Secretary of War Branch T. Archer, June 5, 1841.

<sup>88</sup>Andrew J. Davis' account of the Tarrant expedition appeared in the *Dallas News* of October 6, 1900, and was reprinted in Allen, *Capt. John B. Denton*, 130-142. The finding of Denton's remains, their removal to the Chisum home and later reburial at Denton is described at some length in Allen, *op. cit.*, 17-65.

<sup>89</sup>Brown, *Indian Wars*, 87-88.