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James M. McReynolds

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**FRONTIER TOWNS IN ANTEBELLUM EAST TEXAS:  
JASPER COUNTY**

*by James M. McReynolds*

Deep in Southeast Texas lies Jasper County, "Jewel of the Forest." Organized under Mexican authority and selected as one of the original counties of the Texas Republic, Jasper County emerged in the late antebellum period as an economic and political center for Southeast Texas. An abundance of rich soil and access to the Gulf of Mexico via the Neches and Angelina rivers attracted large numbers of settlers who migrated into Texas prior to the war. Thriving communities soon developed. Dismal log cabins of the Republic period gave way to homes with whitewashed verandas, double chimneys, and faint traces of Greek Revival architecture. Law offices, cotton gins, stores, sawmills, churches, blacksmith shops, and schools sprang up where tall pines once dominated. By the eve of the Civil War, Jasper County contained 4,037 citizens and slaves who lived in or near its ten towns and communities.<sup>1</sup>

The antebellum settlements of Jasper County were all situated around water. Early settlers depended on water for transportation and communication, for power to turn mill wheels, for irrigation of crops, and for personal consumption. As a result, the towns of Bevilport and Zavala developed near the muddy banks of the Angelina River while Ford's Bluff and Wiess's Bluff were situated on the Neches River. Beech Grove and Jasper were established on Sandy Creek, Peach Tree on Lewis Creek, while Magnolia Springs, Erin, and Holly Springs were located in close proximity to clear running, perennial springs.<sup>2</sup>

Bevilport was the first and for a short while, the most prominent settlement in Jasper County. When Colonel Juan N. Almonte made his inspection of Texas for the Mexican government in 1834, he located Bevilport, then known as "Beeville" or "bevil," (sic) on the east bank of the Neches River at the point of juncture with the Angelina.<sup>3</sup> He recorded that the town was "making good progress" and predicted that it would prosper because of its access to the Gulf of Mexico.

The settlement of Bevil began several years before Almonte's visit when John R. Bevil, the earliest settler in the Jasper County area, built a grist mill in this vicinity.<sup>4</sup> As people began moving into this section of East Texas in the late 1820s, the townsite was moved to the east bank of the Angelina River about ten miles above the confluence of the Angelina and Neches rivers. Growth was slow, but by 1834 the town was designated the seat of government for the Mexican Municipality of Bevil.<sup>5</sup>

After the struggle at San Jacinto and the establishment of the Republic, the seat of authority for the old municipality was moved nine miles east to the little village of Jasper. The March 16, 1836 Constitution of the Texas Republic specified that "convenient counties" be organized for the original Mexican division. Consequently, the Municipality of Bevil became Jasper County with the town of Jasper as the county seat.<sup>6</sup> At this time the town of Bevil became known as Bevilport. On June 5, 1834, Bevilport was incorporated with the towns of Columbia, Brazoria, Houston, Anahuac, Nacogdoches, and Harrisburg.

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*James M. McReynolds is Director of Summer Session and Instructor of History at Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches.*

The townsite of Bevilport was laid out three years before its incorporation by George W. Smyth, an early East Texas surveyor. The map which Smyth made of Bevilport divided the townsite into neat, rectangular lots with a plot of land designated to serve the township with a park.<sup>8</sup> As the town developed, however, it had only one major street which led to a number of stores on the waterfront. No doubt these stores and warehouses were of more practical benefit to the people of Bevilport than a public park, for the town rapidly grew into a major Texas riverport. With a regular mail station as early as 1835, the people of East Texas became aware of its existence and merchants at Sabine Town and Galveston soon learned of its value as a port.<sup>9</sup>

The shoals in the Angelina River made Bevilport inaccessible to large boats or rafts during the summer months, but during highwater seasons Bevilport served as the freight depot for northern Jasper County and surrounding areas. It was on the river that most merchants built their stores, and a large hotel was erected on the waterfront in the 1850s.<sup>10</sup> The buildings of Bevilport had large porches which extended for several feet over the river, making loading and unloading easier. With the winter and spring rises, Bevilport became a beehive of activity. Merchants and customers talked prices and politics, Negro stevedores worked and sang to the overseer's orders, small steamboats blew their whistles, and horses' hooves and wagon wheels could be heard sloshing down the muddy street.

Prior to the Civil War the boats which moored along the docks at Bevilport were only crude flatboats or keelboats. Frequently entire cargoes would be lost in transit downriver because of the treacherous snags and shoals in the Angelina and Neches rivers. It was not until after the war that the paddle-wheeled steamboat made its debut in Bevilport. By the late 1860s it was not uncommon to see sleek, white steamboats with catchy names such as the *Camargo*, *Sunflower*, or *Laura* moored along the waterfront unloading the latest fashions from Galveston and loading the various crops to be shipped downriver.<sup>11</sup> From Bevilport these steamboats paddled down the Angelina into the Neches, stopping periodically at Town Bluff, Wright's Landing, Wiess's Bluff and the sawmill town of Beaumont. Several days after leaving Bevilport, the steamers entered Sabine Lake, making one last stop at Sabine Pass before voyaging to far away places such as Galveston or New Orleans.<sup>12</sup>

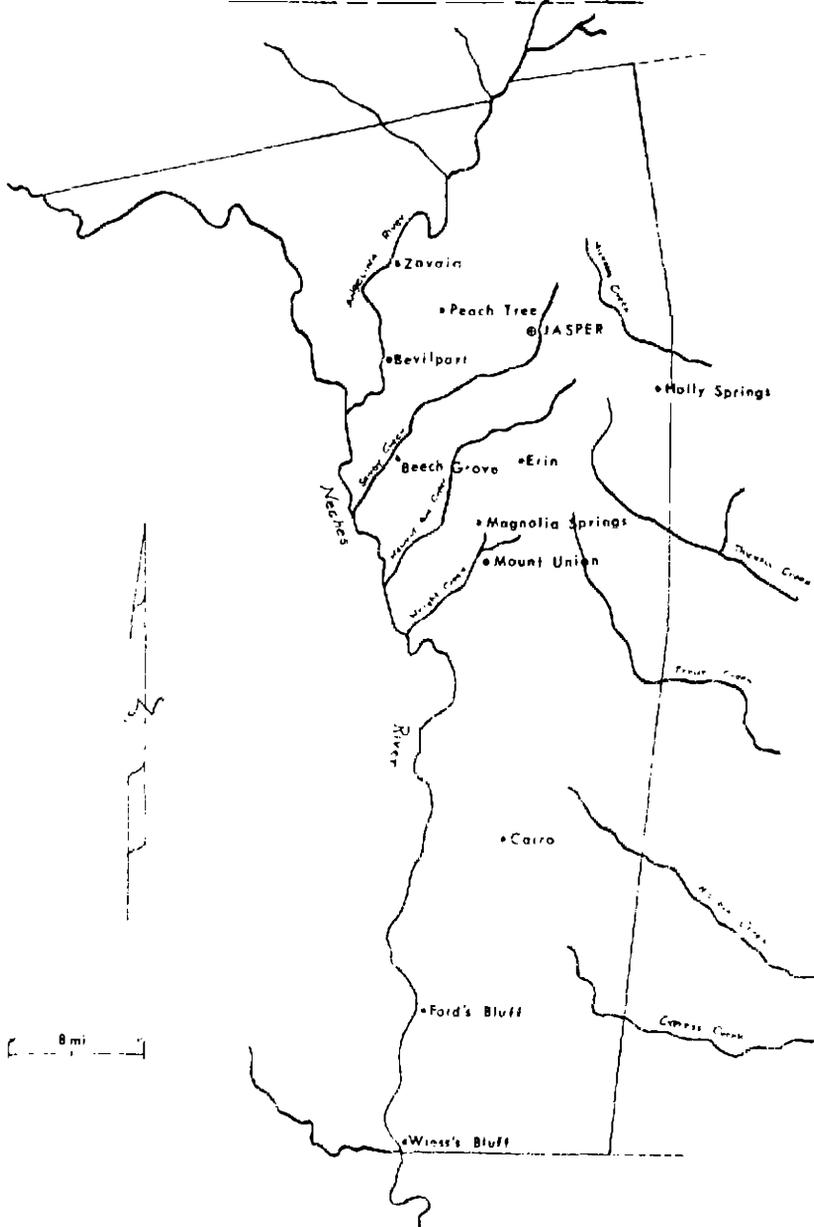
The citizens of this small port town had an interest in cultural activities. While plans for the chartered Indian Creek Academy never materialized, Bevilport had a public school. Elisha D. Seale, the local schoolmaster, was even granted a certificate of exemption from the Civil War to continue his work in the Bevilport school.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the citizens of Bevilport had a fine church house at Indian Creek, scarcely a mile north of the docks, and slaves of the vicinity were sent to the Dixie Baptist Church which met nearby. Although a full-time minister was rarely available, families from neighboring communities congregated each year for a revival at the Indian Creek Church to sing of the "land that is fairer than day" and witness the baptism of their children in the cold waters of Indian Creek.<sup>14</sup>

Scarcely a decade after the steamboats first entered Bevilport, the town began to decline because Beaumont was rapidly expanding as a sawmill center. This meant that timber cut from Jasper County's forests was floated downriver to the mills, making it practically impossible for the steamboats to ply these waters. Several years later the railroads came through the county several miles from Bevilport, and the town, with the exception of several stubborn "old timers," virtually died. Today, all that remains of Bevilport is a small cemetery, a marker which was erected during the Texas Centennial, a public

boat ramp, and the tall pines of the Martin Dies State Park which occupy the spot where the town once stood.<sup>15</sup>

Eight miles upriver from Bevilport and fourteen miles west of Jasper the town of Zavala was founded in 1834. The town site of this early location was probably surveyed by George W. Smyth, and was laid out on the east bank of the Angelina River in the broad plain which extended several miles eastward.<sup>16</sup>

COMMUNITIES IN JASPER COUNTY IN THE 1850's



The neatly divided townlots were situated more than a hundred feet above the bed of the meandering river. Also frequently called Muster Point, Zavala was named for the Mexican empresario Lorenzo de Zavala, who had received this track of land for colonizational purposes in 1820. Thomas B. Huling, a wealthy merchant in early Jasper County, purchased the league of land on which the town was eventually built in 1831. As a Texas booster, he worked diligently for several years trying to persuade settlers to come to this area.<sup>17</sup>

Zavala was well known in East Texas prior to the Texas Revolution because it served briefly as the seat of Mexican government for Bevil's settlement. Mary Austin Holley, a visitor in Texas shortly before its independence, noted that although Zavala did not fulfill her definition of a town, nonetheless it was a "populous neighborhood."<sup>18</sup> During the time of Mary Holley's visit Zavala contained thirty or forty families and considerable business was carried on there. Among the most prominent of Zavala's citizens was Xavier B. Mudd, a Frenchman who moved with his family from Louisiana to Zavala in 1834 and served as sheriff of the area for several years.<sup>19</sup>

On Christmas Eve, 1838, Zavala became a legally incorporated Texas town.<sup>20</sup> Like Bevilport, Zavala depended on the Angelina River for its existence. Its stores and warehouses were built in close proximity to the river and steamboats arrived several months each year. Lumber was probably purchased from Andrew F. Smyth's sawmill, located near Bevilport, and hauled overland by wagon or shipped upriver on flatboats. Testimony to the craftsmanship of the early carpenters of Zavala is the fact that many of the original buildings were still standing more than a century later.<sup>21</sup>

The merchant houses in Zavala overlooked the Angelina River, which was generally fifty yards wide and ten or fifteen feet deep at this location. Travelers from the western part of the county could cross the river near Zavala at either Bohler's ferry, located a mile or two below the townsite, or the ferry which crossed the Angelina at Zavala. Sam Mellon, an early traveler in Texas in 1853, recorded that the fee for him and his horse to use the services of the Zavala ferry was the exorbitant price of ten cents.<sup>22</sup>

In 1847 Thomas B. Huling decided to move to another part of the county. He sold his interests in the town of Zavala to Jerich Durkee of London, England. The deed record to this transaction begins:

Jerich Durkee London received of this day (April 1, 1847) from Thomas B. Huling of the town of Zavala, state of Texas, and County of Jasper, his deed for four thousand nine hundred and sixty acres of land and all his interest in the Town of Zavala, East Bank of the San Angelina River, being his head right granted to him by the Mexican Government in Zavala's County . . .<sup>23</sup>

Included in this transaction were the stipulations that Mr. Durkee endenture sixty families of good moral character, build a good steam mill, and provide a store with one thousand dollars worth of merchandise by the fall of 1849. For this property, Thomas B. Huling received one thousand dollars and "five thousand tin boxes of the Green Mountain Vegetable (sic) ointment . . . and the recipe for making the ointment."<sup>24</sup>

It is not known whether this transaction was the primary factor which halted the growth of Zavala, but by 1858 the town no longer possessed a post office and although Zavala was included in a list of Jasper County communities as late as 1878, the town had practically disappeared before the Civil War.<sup>25</sup>

With the decline of Jasper County's Zavala, a growing community in nearby Angelina County borrowed its name and this town still exists today. The town of old Zavala, Jasper County has been completely abandoned and its

location is indicated only by a marker, erected in 1937 nearby Hamilton cemetery near the old townsite.<sup>26</sup>

When the John R. Bevil family moved from Virginia to Texas in the early 1820s, they built their log cabin approximately twelve miles east of the confluence of the Neches and Angelina rivers. Doubtless they could see a large, impressive, white oak tree from their door. It was under the branches of this tree, which stood until recently on the courthouse lawn, that the little village of Jasper grew.<sup>27</sup>

George W. Smyth, an early visitor in the Bevils' cabin, referred in his autobiography, to the area now encompassed in the town of Jasper:

About the first of April 1830, I arrived at the house of John Bevil Esqr. where Jasper now stands, and commenced my operation of surveying immediately, his survey having been the first. I was charmed with the appearance of the country about Jasper. The rich foliage of the Magnolia-the dense cane-brakes, then, almost impervious-the perennial streams of water, together with the report of Judge Bevil concerning the healthiness of the county-captivated me . . .<sup>28</sup>

However, it was several years after George W. Smyth visited in John Bevil's home that the town of Jasper became a reality.

On March 1, 1835, George A. Nixon, Land Commissioner, for the Department of Nacogdoches, wrote to George W. Smyth, specifying that he lay out the town of Jasper:

I have under this date forwarded you an order to lay out a town in Bevil's Settlement in making the location I wish you to be particular in so laying it out that it may be bounded on one side by the creek and on the other side by a canal which it is contemplated to dig for the convenience of having waters near the Town your own good judgement will at once convince you of the many advantages to the Town of having water on two sides of it you will also be particular in my distinctly marking by stake of a permanent character the corner of lots square, and you will also have an eye to placing the main square in the most elevated and eligible (sic) part of town . . .<sup>29</sup>

Upon receiving this message, Smyth set about surveying the townsite of Jasper, completing the job by early September, 1835. On September 25, Smyth received another letter from Nixon, ordering him to hold an election for an *Ayuntamiento* (or town council). In this letter, Nixon stipulated that these officials were to have the town lots appraised so they could be sold as "soon as practicable."<sup>30</sup>

The location of the new townsite was in the area of "old Squire Bevil's cabin" and was situated in the midst of an abundance of pine and hardwood trees. Although Nixon's canal was never dug, the townsite had an adequate supply of water. Sandy Creek flows east to west through Jasper, and eventually empties into the Neches River some sixteen miles west of the town. This creek supplied the power which was necessary to run the machinery of the early sawmills and gristmills located along its banks.<sup>31</sup>

Shortly before the Republic of Texas period, the Municipality of Bevil was changed to the Municipality of Jasper and the small townsite of Jasper, which had been surveyed only the year before, was designated as the seat of government for this new county.<sup>32</sup> Jasper and Beaumont were incorporated on December 16, 1838, at the same time. Jasper was named in honor of Sergeant William Jasper of Revolutionary War fame, who was killed while attempting to plant the American colors on the parapet of Spring Hill, at the storming of

Savannah, October 9, 1776.<sup>33</sup> In commemoration of this battle, the main road extending south from Main Street in Jasper was named Spring Hill.

Jasper grew slowly during its first few years. Switch cane high enough to hide a man on horseback covered the site of the town, and streets and by-paths had to be cut through this growth before settlers could move about. Gustav Dressel recorded in 1837 that the town of Jasper "could hardly be seen on account of the many trees."<sup>34</sup> Frances Moore, Jr., stated that the town only contained about "twelve or fourteen houses" in 1840.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, Jasper's small size was offset by the joviality of its citizens. There were many public gatherings, barbecues, balls, and other festivities held in the town, and one writer stated that "it was no uncommon thing for the women and girls to ride ten miles to a barbecue, and then dance until daylight."<sup>36</sup> Sam Houston could testify to the hospitality of the citizens of Jasper. Sometime during 1838 he spent a night in the town where a ball was held in his honor. Backwoodsmen from all over the country attended the grand barbecue, heard the patriotic speeches given in Houston's honor, and wore their Sunday clothes at the ball held in the log framed courthouse.<sup>37</sup> William Priest, who left Jasper to seek his fortune in the California Gold Rush of 1849, wrote to a friend on July 10, 1851, declaring:

I spent the fourth of July at work but I felt miserable all day as I knew if I was in old Jasper I could be at a dance and I was dreaming all night how I thought I could hear the fiddle and fiddler say premenade (sic) all.<sup>38</sup>

The citizens of Jasper took great pride in their log courthouse and jail which was erected in the late 1830s on the main square of the town.<sup>39</sup> People felt secure in knowing that their land deeds and other records were safely housed in this municipal building. However, this security was temporarily destroyed with the mysterious burning of the county courthouse and mail on October 23, 1849. Arson was suspected, but an investigation which lasted throughout the 1850s failed to identify a criminal. A large, frame, two-story courthouse was built on the same site shortly after the fire, and most of the deeds were quickly refilled.<sup>40</sup>

Jasper enjoyed a large variety of stores and businesses during the 1850s. Jacob DeCordova, who visited Jasper in 1857, spoke of the town as "containing about four-hundred inhabitants . . . seven or eight stores of assorted merchandise . . . and a good courthouse."<sup>41</sup> Shortly after the Civil War two hotels were built near the town square. Prominent among the citizens of Jasper was Dr. William M. Neyland, who was responsible for delivering most of the babies in Jasper in its early years; Dr. Stephen H. Everitt, a merchant whose store supplied the neighboring residents; and Hanibal Goode, the Chief Justice of the county for many years.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to business and civic affairs, the citizens of Jasper showed an early interest in providing an education for their children. Consequently, town officials petitioned the state legislature for a charter for a school. The State of Texas honored their request on November 24, 1851 by creating the Jasper Collegiate Institute.<sup>43</sup> The school received its first pupils in 1852, and served the families of Jasper County for the next decade and a half. Offering a wide curriculum, several hundred students graduated from its program.<sup>44</sup>

Two miles north of the Bevilport-Jasper road and five miles northwest of Jasper is the community of Peach Tree. Settled prior to the Civil War, this community took its name from the wild peach trees which grew prolifically in the area.<sup>45</sup> The land surrounding the town was considered the best in Jasper

County, and large farms were cultivated in and around Peach Tree. Ramsey C. Armstrong, an early Jasper County minister and school teacher, recalled moving to Peach Tree shortly after the Civil War. He established a farm "doing most of the building with my own hands" and taught school.<sup>46</sup> Due largely to Armstrong's efforts, the Peach Tree Academy opened its doors to Jasper County scholars.

E. I. Kellie, editor of the *Jasper News-Boy*, attended a commencement at the Peach Tree Academy in 1871 and reported that:

The examination came off on Friday, the 23rd (June, 1871), and we were highly pleased with the whole affair. A large number of persons were present from almost every section of the county. The rehearsal of lessons during the day were all very good . . . At twelve o'clock the immense throng were invited to partake of the dinner furnished by the neighborhood and patrons of the school. Peach Tree has always carried the palm for generosity in furnishing good dinners to visitors, but this time they overdone anything we ever witnessed in the way of public dinners. It seems to us that all vied with each other to see who could bring the most . . . and the necessary beverage of Texans, strong coffee was there by the barrel.<sup>47</sup>

At its zenith, Peach Tree had a population of about one hundred people and possessed a post office, a general store, and a gristmill. However, postal services were discontinued during the 1890s and today Peach Tree contains only two country churches and a few scattered farmhouses.<sup>48</sup>

Another antebellum Jasper County community was Beech Grove. When George W. Smyth and Frances M. Grigsby married in 1834, they paid Benjamin Allen, a Jasper carpenter, fifty dollars to build a home for them on Walnut Run Creek four miles east of the Neches River and eight miles west of the town of Jasper.<sup>49</sup> The little community of Beech Grove developed near the Smyth home. Although Beech Grove claimed only a few families, many people visited this early east Texas town to hunt or to talk about politics with George Smyth, Texas' first Land Commissioner and later a United States Congressman. Smyth owned a large law library and frequently loaned his books to visitors. By 1850 Beech Grove had become a regular stopping place for travelers of the Jasper-Wiess's Bluff road.<sup>50</sup>

In the immediate vicinity of Beech Grove was a stand of large pines, and west of the community toward the Neches River the terrain became swampy. Deer, squirrels, game fowl, alligators, and bears lived in this boggy area. George W. Armstrong, a grandson of George W. Smyth, recorded in his diary his childhood experiences of growing up in Smyth's "large old hand hewn log house." Armstrong noted that the Beech Grove townsmen came to his aid one day when he wandered too far into the swamp and got lost.<sup>51</sup> Two cemeteries are all that remain of Beech Grove.

Although there is some disagreement as to the exact year that Sherod and Alex Wright came from Louisiana into Texas, it is believed they were among the earliest families to move into the Jasper County area.<sup>52</sup> With John and Frances Bevil as their only neighbors, the Wrights settled on two leagues about twelve miles southwest of Bevil's cabin. There was an abundance of clear running springs in the thick grove of pine trees near the Wright's homesite, and they called their new home "Pinetucky."<sup>53</sup> In the 1850s Pinetucky was renamed Magnolia Springs, and several of the early families moved to a smaller community two miles south of the springs known as Mount Union.<sup>54</sup>

Dr. John Everett Armstrong brought his family to Magnolia Springs in 1849, and his son, Ramsey C. Armstrong, referred to Pinetucky in his

autobiography when he said that his family "moved from Arkansas and arrived in the neighborhood of Pinetucky, Jasper County, Texas, December 12, 1849."<sup>55</sup> The Armstrong family purchased 1,100 acres of land from Sherod Wright and immediately began clearing the land for spring planting. Other early settlers of Magnolia Springs included James Bean, a fiery evangelist, and James Lee. Lee owned the only general store in Magnolia Springs. He advertised his merchandise in the *Jasper News-Boy* under the motto: "Quick sales and small profits."<sup>56</sup>

In 1882 the Texas Tram and Lumber Company moved its logging camp to Magnolia Springs and floated logs from Wright's landing down the Neches River to Beaumont.<sup>57</sup> In 1894 the logging camp moved to Kirbyville, leaving Magnolia Springs virtually desolate.

Four miles northeast of Magnolia Springs on the old Jasper road was the farming community of Erin. Prior to the Civil War this community had a general store and post office. Mail services were discontinued during the reconstruction years, and Erin did not enjoy a post office from 1877 to 1882. Erin had a large cotton gin which served neighboring communities well into the twentieth century.<sup>58</sup>

Another antebellum Jasper County community was Holly Springs. This settlement was established in 1850 near a perennial spring in present Newton County. After the Civil War the postmaster at Holly Springs moved four miles west of the first settlement, building his new home on the Jasper-Newton road in Jasper County. The name of the settlement moved with him. Serving as a half-way station between Newton and Jasper, Holly Springs contained two large general merchandise stores shortly after the Civil War. These were owned by William S. McCree and A. Adams. Here local citizens purchased seed, farming implements, groceries, and clothing. Today, Holly Springs contains only a church or two, and a cemetery.<sup>59</sup>

When the Benjamin Richardson family moved into Texas in 1830, they settled along the east bank of the Neches River several miles below the village of Bevilport. Acquiring a league of land from Empresario Lorenzo de Zavala, Richardson built his home overlooking the river and operated a ferry for many years. Before 1851 this location was known to rivermen as Richardson's Bluff.<sup>60</sup>

After the death of Ben Richardson in 1849, his wife sold the land to three brothers, John A., Philip U., and Charles T. Ford, of Baltimore, Maryland. Consequently the name of Richardson's Bluff changed to Ford's Bluff. After inspecting their new properties, the Ford brothers decided that money could be made in the sawmill business. Philip Ford traveled to New Orleans to purchase machinery for a proposed mill. He was exposed to yellow fever while in New Orleans and died three days after returning to Jasper County. John and Charles left Ford's Bluff shortly after their brother's death.<sup>61</sup> In later years they sold their property to several Jasper County citizens.

The antebellum community of Wiess's Bluff developed on the east bank of the Neches River near the home of Simon Wiess, the towns' founder. Born in Lublin, Poland, in 1800, Wiess led an eventful life before moving to Texas in 1837. Sam Houston, then President of the Texas Republic, was impressed with Wiess's vast linguistic knowledge and appointed him as deputy collector of customs at Camp Sabine (present Sabinetown). In December, 1837, Wiess married Margaret Sturrock of Natchitoches, Louisiana, and the newly married couple lived in Nacogdoches for a while. In 1838 Wiess took his family and a load of cotton by keelboat to Sabine Pass via the Neches River, to sell. The

Wiess family lived for a while at Grigsby's Bluff, now the present site of Port Neches, and in 1840 moved again, to a site some sixteen miles north of Beaumont on the Neches River. It was here that he established the town of Wiess's Bluff.<sup>62</sup>

Located in the extreme southwest corner of Jasper County, this town served as the southern terminus of the Jasper-Wiess's Bluff road. Here at the head of tidewater on the Neches River, Wiess built a store and several warehouses for cotton and other agricultural crops.<sup>63</sup> During the dry seasons, when it was impossible to travel upriver by steamboat, Jasper County farmers came to Wiess's Bluff in wagons to purchase goods imported from Sabine Pass. Writing about the town which he founded, Wiess stated in 1859 that he had resided here for nearly nineteen years. He believed that this was a healthy section of the country, because "we have never had occasion to employ a physician." He also noted that pine and cypress were the predominant trees, and most of the settlers engaged in either farming or cattle raising.<sup>64</sup>

During the Civil War, Wiess's Bluff served as a depot for military goods, and near the end of the war a small detachment of Confederate soldiers were stationed here to guard quartermaster supplies which were stockpiled in this community.<sup>65</sup> Large amounts of cotton were also stored in the warehouses at Wiess's Bluff, and as late as February, 1865, thirty to forty grown Negro men were working at the dock of this town.<sup>66</sup>

By the late 1860s, the steamboat made its debut on the docks of the Wiess's Bluff waterfront, thus beginning a new era for the town. Florence Stratton, an early Jasper County resident, recalled a round-trip steamboat ride from Wiess's Bluff to Sabine Pass which cost two dollars and fifty cents — "meals included!"<sup>67</sup> In the river logging days of the 1970s and 1880s, Wiess's Bluff became the site of a major logging operation for the Beaumont Lumber Company. During these years it counted almost two thousand people among its population. But the failure of the railroad to go through the town in the 1890s ended the importance of Wiess's Bluff, and today it is the site of a cemetery and several weathered houses still overlooking the Neches River.<sup>68</sup>

The last decade of the nineteenth century witnessed great changes in Jasper County. River transportation ended, and with the coming of the railroads in the 1890s, new waves of immigrants poured into the county. New towns and communities replaced many of those of the antebellum years. By the turn of the century, the timber industry brought new economic growth to the county. Yet, even today, names in rural cemeteries, locations of forgotten towns, and a few personal memoirs, diaries, and letters serve to remind the citizens of Jasper County of their rich heritage.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Schedule #1, Free Inhabitants, Schedule #2, Slave Inhabitants, United States Census, Jasper County, Texas 1860.

<sup>2</sup>See map on p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Juan N. Almonte, "Statistical Report on Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XXVIII (January, 1925), 179.

<sup>4</sup>F. W. Johnson, *A History of Texas and Texans* (5 vols; New York, 1914), II, 703; Andrew F. Smyth Papers, Notebook, 1858, in the William Seale Estate, Beaumont, Texas.

<sup>5</sup>Walter P. Webb (ed.), *The Handbook of Texas* (2 vols; Austin, 1952), I, 153.

<sup>6</sup>The Constitution of the Republic of Texas, Article IV, Section II, as cited in *Vernon's Annotated Constitution of the State of Texas* (4 vols; Kansas City, 1955), III, 528.

<sup>7</sup>H. P. N. Gammel, *The Laws of Texas, 1822-1898* (10 vols; Austin, 1898), I, 1298-1299.

<sup>8</sup>*Town Plot of Bevilport* in William Seale Estate; George W. Smyth to George A. Nixon, 1834, in George W. Smyth Papers, University of Texas Archives, Austin, Texas.

<sup>9</sup>William Seale, *Texas Riverman* (Austin, 1966), 103-104; Edna White, *East Texas Riverboat Era and Its Decline* (Beaumont, 1965), 43; "Early History of Jasper," *The Jasper News-Boy*, May 28, 1936.

<sup>10</sup>Seale, *Texas Riverman*, 114; *Jasper News-Boy*, May 7, 1870.

<sup>11</sup>Account Book of Andrew F. Smyth, 1858, in William Seale Estate.

<sup>12</sup>"Pioneer Days in Jasper," *The Galveston News*, October 25, 1908; Account Book of Andrew F. Smyth, 1858, in William Seale Estate.

<sup>13</sup>Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, IV, 114. The charter for the Indian Creek Academy was granted on January 5, 1854. Also see "Certificates of Exemption from the Civil War for Elisha D. Seale," August 14, 1862, and August 3, 1863, in William Seale Estate.

<sup>14</sup>Seale, *Texas Riverman*, 91.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 157-158; Webb, *Handbook of Texas*, I, 153; The Centennial marker which was erected in 1936 to commemorate the town of Bevilport reads: "Bevilport: important River navigation point, 1830-1860 — Established by John Bevil in whose honor the municipality was first named in 1834 with Bevilport as seat of justice - A mail station in 1835 - County seat of Jasper County, 1836-1837 - Incorporated June 5, 1837 - A business and social center until the Civil War."

<sup>16</sup>Mary Austin Holley, *Texas Lexington*, 1836), 112; Frances Moore, Jr., *Map and Description of Texas, Containing Sketches of Its History, Geology, Geography, and Statistics* (Reprint: Waco, 1965), 89; Unidentified map of a townsite thought to be Zavala, in William Seale Estate.

<sup>17</sup>Adele B. Looscan, "Elizabeth Bullock Huling," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XI (July, 1907), 22-23; "Early History of Jasper," *The Jasper News-Boy*, May 28, 1936.

<sup>18</sup>Holley, *Texas*, 123.

<sup>19</sup>Webb, *Handbook of Texas*, II, 961; Looscan, "Elizabeth Bullock Huling," 66-67.

<sup>20</sup>Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, II, 22-23.

<sup>21</sup>T. C. Richardson, *East Texas: Its History and Its Makers* (3 vols; New York, 1940), III, 1040; Account book of Andrew F. Smyth pertaining to sawmill production, 1844, in William Seale Estate.

<sup>22</sup>Memorandum Book of Sam W. Mellon of his travels in West Texas, September 19 to October 20, 1853 in Sam W. Mellon Papers, Archives division, Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.

<sup>23</sup>Recorded in Vol. A. 44, Deed Records of Jasper County, Texas.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 45-46.

<sup>25</sup>Webb, *Handbook of Texas*, II, 951.

<sup>26</sup>The marker erected during the Texas Centennial in 1936 reads: "Zavala Established upon land included in the empresario grant in 1829 to Lorenzo de Zavala in

whose honor it was named - Early boat landing - Mail and stage station - Incorporated in 1838 - A post office until the Civil War."

<sup>27</sup>John Henry Brown, *History of Texas from 1685 to 1892* (St. Louis, 1892), 168; Webb, *Handbook of Texas*, I, 906; Winnie Allen, "The Autobiography of George W. Smyth," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XXXVI (January 1933), 202.

<sup>28</sup>Allen, *Ibid.*, The original copy of this autobiography was written by Smyth in 1858 and is found in the Smyth Papers, University of Texas Archives, Austin, Texas.

<sup>29</sup>George Antonio Nixon, to George W. Smyth, March 1, 1835, in George W. Smyth Papers, University of Texas Archives.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, September 25, 1835.

<sup>31</sup>Allen, "Autobiography of George W. Smyth," 202; Mrs. J. B. Hatcher, Unpublished paper on Jasper, Texas, November 16, 1936, in Jasper Scrapbook, University of Texas Archives.

<sup>32</sup>Vernon's *Annotated Constitution*, III, 528; Jasper was officially made the legal county seat on January 14, 1844, yet it became the unofficial county seat with the creation of the county on March 16, 1836. See Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, I, 946; II, 929-930.

<sup>33</sup>Gammel, *Ibid.*, II, 9; Dumas Malone (ed.), "William Jasper," *Dictionary of American Biography* (22 vols; New York, 1933), X, 1.

<sup>34</sup>Gustav Dressel, *Gustav Dressel's Houston Journal: Adventures in North America and Texas, 1837-1841* (Edited and translated by Max Freund; Austin, 1954), 60.

<sup>35</sup>Moore, *Map and Description of Texas*, 89.

<sup>36</sup>Looscan, "Elizabeth Bullock Huling," 68.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>William Priest to "friend"/in Jasper County, Texas/, July 20, 1851, in William Seale Estate.

<sup>39</sup>Hatcher, "History of Jasper, Texas."

<sup>40</sup>John Frazer to George W. Smyth, October 30, 1849; George Dougharty to Honorable George W. Smyth, November 5, 1849, in Smyth Papers, University of Texas Archives.

<sup>41</sup>Jacob DeCordova, *Texas: Her Resources and Her Public Men* (Philadelphia, 1858), 280.

<sup>42</sup>William McFarland, *William McFarland Journal* (Edited by Frederick C. Chabot; San Antonio, 1942), 34.

<sup>43</sup>Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, IV, 1.

<sup>44</sup>R.B. Martin, "Early Schools in Jasper County," *East Texas Historical Journal*, III (March, 1965), 49; Schedule #, Social Statistics, United States Census, Jasper County, Texas, 1860.

<sup>45</sup>Webb, *Handbook of Texas*, II, 349.

<sup>46</sup>George W. Armstrong, *The Memoirs of George W. Armstrong* (Edited by George V. Moseley; Austin, 1958), 13.

<sup>47</sup>*The Jasper News-Boy*, July 1, 1871.

<sup>48</sup>Webb, *Handbook of Texas*, II, 349.

<sup>49</sup>Receipt of George W. Smyth for fifty dollars paid to Benjamin Allen for building a house for said Smyth on Walnut Run, March 23, 1836, in William Seale Estate.

<sup>50</sup>Sarah Ann Smyth to George W. Smyth, date unknown, in Smyth Papers, University of Texas Archives.

<sup>51</sup>Armstrong, *Memoirs of G.W. Armstrong*, 47.

<sup>52</sup>For information regarding the disagreement as to the exact year the Wrights moved to Jasper County see Thomas A. Wilson, *Some Early Southeast Texas Families* (Houston, 1965), 108.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>Webb, *Handbook of Texas*, II, 130; Army Engineers, *East Texas Counties*. Record group No. 98, 1867, in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>55</sup>Armstrong, *Memoirs of G.W. Armstrong*, 8.

<sup>56</sup>*The Texas Almanac, 1870* (Galveston, 1871), 218; *The Jasper News-Boy*, March 26, 1871.

<sup>57</sup>Webb, *Handbook of Texas*, II, 130.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 570.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 828; *The Jasper News-Boy*, August 20, 1873.

<sup>60</sup>Mrs. Grace Bridges to the author at Roganville, Texas, March 8, 1968. Mrs. Bridges had family papers to substantiate her statements.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*; Webb, *Handbook of Texas*, I, 618.

<sup>62</sup>Nicholas Adolphus Sterne, *The Diary of Adolphus Sterne, 1838-1851* (Edited by Archie P. McDonald under the title of *Hurrah for Texas*; Waco, 1969), 85, 203, 231; "East Texas Pioneer Stories Retold," *The Beaumont Enterprise*, January 13, 1946; Webb, *Handbook of Texas*, II, 906.

<sup>63</sup>Simon Wiess to Andrew F. Smyth, October 1, 1864, in Andrew F. Smyth Papers, William Seale Estate.

<sup>64</sup>*The Texas Almanac, 1859*, 175.

<sup>65</sup>Valentine Wiess to Andrew F. Smyth, February 20, 1865, in Andrew F. Smyth Papers, William Seale Estate.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*; Hatcher, "History of Jasper, Texas."

<sup>67</sup>Florence Stratton, *The Story of Beaumont*, date and publication place unknown, 171. There is a copy of this monograph in the Beaumont Public Library, Special Collections.

<sup>68</sup>Webb, *Handbook of Texas*, II, 906.