

MUSEUM MUSINGS

Mission Statement

The mission of the Denton County Historical Museum, Inc., is to collect, preserve, and display artifacts including documents, photographs, and other records relative to the history of Denton County and its people for public education through exhibits, research facilities, and special events.

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The DCHM, Inc., is a member of American Association of Museums, Texas Association of Museums, Greater Denton Arts Council, Denton Chamber of Commerce, and KERA Partners

CITY OF DENTON CELEBRATES SESQUICENTENNIAL, 1857-2007

The Denton County Historical Museum, Inc., is joining in the celebration of the Sesquicentennial of the City of Denton throughout the month of January.

According to the Handbook of Texas, Denton "was founded in 1857 in order to become the county seat, because residents wanted one located near the center of the county. Hiram Cisco, William Woodruff, and William Loving donated 100 acres as the site for the town. . .A commission composed of Otis G. Welch, sometimes known as the 'Father of Denton,' county surveyor Charles C. Lacy, and Joseph A. Carroll laid out the city."

The Museum will be honoring the Sesquicentennial with a number of events. Special exhibits of photographs from our extensive collection will focus on how early Dentonites worked, played, worshipped, and were educated.

We have a special exhibit devoted to early local photographers, with photographs and early equipment. The community is well-documented photographically throughout its history, and the Museum is

a repository of images from numerous local photographers.

The Museum's 1875 abstract survey map will be displayed. This fascinating map, a gift of the Jagoe Abstract Company, takes one back to a period when many of the families that we recognize from Denton street names were arriving in North Texas.

Visitors will be able to consult the complete centennial issue of the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, from February 3, 1957.

Tiffany Farmer, a UNT history major from Ft. Worth, working in coordination with Judy Selph, is preparing a scrapbook of fashions and hairstyles through the years, featuring photos of Denton High School students from the DHS Yearbook.

The Denton Dulci-Doodlers will perform at the Museum in late January, honoring American music of the period. Call the Museum for details (940-380-0877).

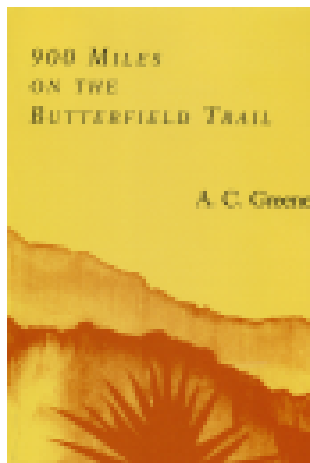


Denton Dandies of the 1890's

From left: Lawrence Schweer, Ford Witherspoon, Wylie Smith, Bala Williams, Roland Schweer

From the DCHM, Inc., photo collection

NEWS FROM THE DCHM, INC.



"Remember, boys, nothing on God's earth must stop the United States mail!"

—John Butterfield

New Books in the Gift Shop

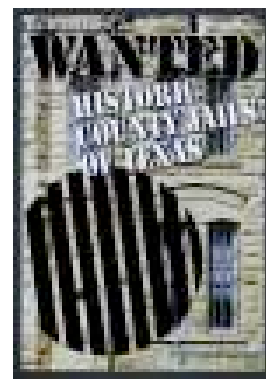
We have two new books available in the Gift Shop: **Wanted: Historic County Jails of Texas**, by Ed Blackburn, Jr. (hardbound, 412p. \$39.95), from the Texas A&M Travel Guides series, is a copiously illustrated look at historic jails of Texas, with information about architecture, interviews with local officials, and archival photographs.

900 Miles on the Butterfield Trail, by A. C. Greene (paperbound, 293

p. \$27.95), is from the University of North Texas Press. This is the story of both the Butterfield Overland Mail service, and A. C. Greene's retracing of the route through Texas and New Mexico. Lovers of Texas history and letters know the late A. C. Greene as a great Texas writer. Here he recounts the story of the longest stagecoach line, with perhaps the shortest lifespan—1858 to 1861.

Both books are available in the Gift Shop, and on

the website: click on "Gift Shop" for details on ordering these and other books.



MEMORIALS AND HONORARIA

Friends of the Museum often make donations in honor of friends and loved ones. The Museum acknowledges these donations with a card to both the donor (for income tax purposes) and the family of the person memorialized or honored. If you place a newspaper notice concerning memorials, in order to avoid confusion, please be sure to use the mailing address: DCHM,

Inc., PO Box 2800, Denton TX 76202. We do not receive mail at the Museum.

Memorials have been received for the following: **Evalee Woolaver, Rowdy Pursur, Jack F. Schmitz, jr., Benjamin Carter Cagle, Bob Castleberry, Mary Jagoe Berry, Emma Jean de Brohun Butler, Holly Shelton, Dick Swafford, Peggy Morse, J. M. Forrest, Jean Campbell, Mildred Hawk, Beatrice Forester,**

Arlon Newton, Arthur J. & Norma Sealy, John H. Guyer, Kathleen Miller Stanger, Louella Margarite de Brohun Winfree, Margaret Chrisman, Glenna Hope Harris, and Carroll Edwin Lowrey.

We have received gifts in honor of: **Doyle E. Chrisman, Opal Hall, Cecil "Zeke" Martin, Crillon E. Payne, Thelma R. Stevens, and Norma Lynn Gamble.**



FINANCIAL NEWS

Now is a good time to help your Museum financially. The Denton County Historical Museum, Inc., is a 501 (c) (3) organization, so your donations are tax-deductible.

The Museum receives no

public funds, and is supported solely by Gift Shop sales and private donations. Our staff are all volunteers, but we need your help to pay for essentials like exhibit supplies and electricity. You don't have

to be Bill Gates or Warren Buffett to help preserve Denton County history.

Mail your donations, memorials, or honoraria to The Denton County Historical Museum, Inc., PO Box 2800, Denton TX 76202

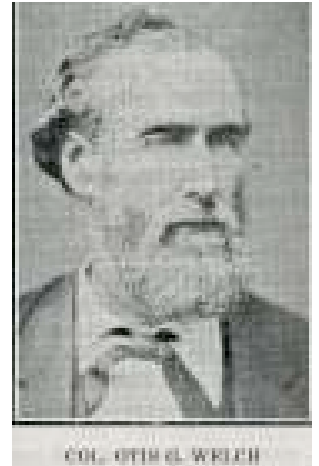
HOLLY'S CORNER—SOME FOUNDING FATHERS OF DENTON

Otis G. Welch, "The Father of Denton"

Otis G. Welch was born in Monmouth, Maine on December 21, 1823 (according to the Census and his tombstone). He graduated from Yale, then taught school and practiced law in Illinois and Virginia. He came to Alton, the county seat of Denton County, in 1852. He moved to Denton in 1857 when the town was established. He was the legal advisor in the establishment of Denton as the new county seat. He helped lay out and name the city streets.

He held the rank of Captain when he organized Co. E, First Chickasaw and Choctaw Mounted Rifles of Gen. Cooper's Indian Regiment during the Civil war. His officers were Matt Daugherty, Joseph A. Carroll, Cal Coker, and Sam Patton.

He married Mrs. Nannie Chinn Lowrey in 1874. He was a member of Denton I.O.O.F. Lodge #82. He died in Denton on February 10, 1878, and is buried in I.O.O.F. Cemetery.



Judge Joseph A. Carroll

Joseph A. Carroll, one of Denton's most eminent settlers, was born near Louisiana, Missouri (Pike County) on November 28, 1832. He moved to Denton in the early 1850's and established an abstract company in 1856, which has been operated as Jagoe Abstracts since 1874. Around 1858, W. T. G. Weaver licensed Carroll to practice law. About the same time he married Cecelia Jane Burris (1842-1869), of Denton.

During the Civil War, he served with Welch's Company as a private and later as a lieutenant. In 1862, he transferred to De Morse's 29th Texas Cavalry, where he reached the rank of Major before being discharged in June, 1865. In September, 1870, he married his second wife, Martha Inmon.

On February 16, 1876, Carroll won the election for District Judge. He sought and won re-election in 1878, but chose not to run in the 1880 election. He also served as Chairman of the 5th Congressional District Democratic Committee. Carroll organized the Exchange National Bank in 1881 and served as president. First State Bank is located at that site today.

Carroll served as Mayor of Denton for 1890-91. He was a member of the syndicate that organized and founded Normal College, today known as the University of North Texas, and of the group that organized CIA, now Texas Woman's University. He also was a member of the I.O.O.F. Lodge.

Judge Carroll died on October 12th 1891. He is buried in the I.O.O.F. Cemetery. The Joseph A. Carroll Courts Building was named in his honor in 1976. The seat of county government moved to this building in 1978.



Judge Joseph A. Carroll

Denton's First Official Mayor, Joel B. Sawyer

Joel B. Sawyer was born in 1813 in New Hampshire. He was an engineer on the Boston and Worcester Railroad in 1835 and part of 1836. He worked for the South Carolina Railroad in late 1836, and then for the Georgia Railroads until 1853. He moved to New Orleans and was Master Mechanic of the New Orleans, Jackson and Great Northern Railroad. He came to Texas in 1857 and in 1858 was offered the superintendency of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad but did not accept the position.

He was in Denton County by the mid-1860's. According to a letter dated Aug. 29, 1869 in Ed Bates' *History and Reminiscences of Denton County*, J. B. Sawyer was recommended for appointment to Justice of the Peace Precinct 1, Notary Public, County Commissioner, and Mayor. This gave him four different official titles. He was induced to accept by his friends signing a petition.

The 1870 Denton County Census shows that J. B. Sawyer and his wife, Caroline B., were living in Denton. Also in the household was Otis G. Welch. The census states that Caroline was born in Maine, as was Otis Welch. There may have been a family relationship, but it cannot be proved.

Caroline B. Sawyer died in 1888, and J. B. Sawyer died in 1895. Both are buried in I.O.O.F. Cemetery.



Joel B. Sawyer

Siscoe Deeded Land For New Townsite

Hiram Siscoe, who donated 40 acres for Denton's original townsite, got 320 acres of Denton County land by settling on it in 1833. His preemption certificate, No.

44, was signed by Gov. Ellisha M. Peason. On this certificate the name is spelled "Siscoe."

The 320 acres of pre-empted land was described as situated in Denton County in the waters of Peason Creek, a tributary of the Elton Fork of the Trinity River, about six miles north and seven degrees west of Alton.

Siscoe's affidavit to get title to the land reads:

"I, Hiram Siscoe, do solemnly swear that I believe I am settled on vacant land and that, further, settlement was made on or about the first day of December, 1833 to the best of my knowledge, to help God."

HISTORY THROUGH NEWSPAPERS: FROM THE CENTENNIAL EDITION OF THE DENTON RECORD-CHRONICLE, FEB. 3, 1957: HOW DENTON WAS BORN



Gave Richest Land Away, Died Broke

The most valuable portion of Denton, including the sites of business houses around the square, the courthouse and many fine homes, was in the 20-acre tract given to Denton by R. W. Woodruff for the location of the county seat here.

Woodruff donated the 20 acres from a 100.5-acre tract out of the William Neal survey. The entire tract was later within the city limits.

Woodruff died before he could deed the 20 acres to the county. His widow, Louise E. Woodruff, was named administratrix of the estate. It was she who actually deeded over the land.

The widow's fairness in transferring out her husband's promise was shown when the rest of the 100.5 acres had to be subdivided and sold to pay the indebtedness of her husband's estate. This was ordered by the Probate Court of Denton County.

Sheriff Sold Lots And City Was Created

Pioneers Walked Icy Trails To Buy Land For \$25

They walked slowly and carefully over the deer-trail to get my

the winding trail, their feet slipped with rage to keep from slipping on the ice.

Law-abiding branches of good oak trees swayed and broke, showering ice on the men, women and children packed just to the small clearing.

Some came by horse or wagon from Alton, but most came on foot - on skis or on sleds on an icy, slippery trail. More than 20 families were represented.

The tall, handsome sheriff stood on a little box and watched his wild lot.

Around the clearing most of the women and children huddled under robes and quilts in open farm wagons.

The sheriff looked at the man across him. Most of them were his friends and neighbors at Alton, but some were from distant settlements. Their faces were blue with cold but their eyes burned with excitement.

"We are here today," announced Sheriff C. Alex Williams, "in accordance of the public land of our new county and as required by law. Your county Commissioners Court has reserved the good square, one lot for our new courthouse, one for the jail -"

His gravelled feet added with a clunk. "As your sheriff I've got

to have your place in get my business."

The men who would be the fellow citizens in this brand new town and county soul laughed with him. Then he told them that an entire block of about four acres had been reserved for schools and churches. The rest of the 20-acre site was up for sale in the highest bid.

Bidding for the new lots of Denton began briskly on that cold day, Jan. 19, 1857, one of the coldest in history here.

A heavy snow had fallen on Jan. 4. The roads and trails were covered with snow and ice as an outbreak had followed the snow storm.

Williams later recalled that settlement had to start little more than five years. The ground was literally covered with ice, snow and branches that had broken under a heavy coating of ice.

"In modern days," he said years later, "the sale would have been postponed for better weather."

Reckless bids around the square went with a wildness, and one on each of the four sides - west first.

One G. Welch, county legal adviser, bid \$20 for a site for his law office, a lot that years later would be the site of the Denton County National Bank.

About 18 lots were sold at prices ranging from \$25 to \$50. John L.

Lovjoy bought a lot for the store he would open almost in its entirety from Alton. Henderson Marple bought on the southeast corner for his hotel, tavern and wagon yard to be moved from Alton.

The final sale that day went to James H. Siscoe, who wanted an east tract for his mercantile store. His bid of \$25 for the west lot on the west side was the day's highest.



Sheriff C. Alex Williams