

CRAWFORD

Official Newsletter of The Crawford County Historical & Genealogical Society, Inc.



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Escape From A Southern Prison

BRIEF HISTORY OF PRISON LIFE & ESCAPE FROM CAMP FORD

By Robert Burke

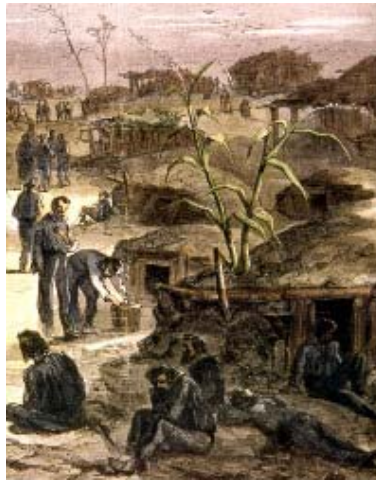
In presenting this story to the public, the author desires to give a plain statement of events, as experienced by himself and his companions in imprisonment and escape. Had he thrown around the simple narrative some of the embellishments of fancy, it would probably have suited some readers better, but as his object was not to write a beautiful fiction even though founded on fact, he believes and hopes it will not prove uninteresting to any of the hundreds who had part and lot in trials and sufferings similar to those depicted by him. If it serves in a humble way to keep green the memory of those who willingly risked their lives that a country might be saved to those that came after; his object will be attained.

Camp Ford prison was situated on the Southern slope of a bit of rising ground, a few miles east of Tyler, Texas. It contained an area of perhaps ten acres, enclosed by a stout stockade. This stockade was built of pine timber, split and set into the ground from three to four feet, and projecting nearly eight feet above the surface. On the out side an embankment was thrown up against it, so that the guard, when patrolling had the prisoners under surveillance.

An abundant stream of fresh spring water flowed through the western part of the prison. This matter was a great boon to the prisoners and in some degree mitigated and relieved their distress. It was not only food and drink to us, but it was a safeguard against

an enemy more relentless and preserving than the Rebel Home Guard, viz: the vermin. It was necessary to scald our clothing daily to prevent this pest from devouring us. The writer saw some of the men who neglected this precaution, eaten to the bone, and their deaths hastened by this small but indefatigable foe.

Our daily life was monotonous in the extreme. After roll call by the Rebels and the issuing to us of our scant rations, we were left to our own resources in the main to while



Drawing of Camp Ford, TX from History of Texas website

From Our County Historian Richard Eastridge

away the tedious hours. Of games we had baseball, checkers, chess and cards. Of books we had none save an occasional Bible that had been on the person of their owners when captured. While they were read with diligence, it can be said that religion made much headway among the men. As the days went by with no prospect of exchange or parole, the men became low spirited. The insufficient and unwholesome food doled out to them, together with want of exercise produced scurvy and kindred diseases. They became selfish, peevish, sullen, and at times dangerous. Fisticuffs were of daily occurrence. Sometimes hundreds of men would engage in them at the same time, and more than once the ministers of the Gospel were driven from their improvised pulpits in the open air, by a fighting, surging mass of madden men. Sometimes the Rebels would enter the prison and put a stop to these brutalities at the point of the bayonet.

Naturally a person confined to such quarters would let his thoughts dwell much of the time on liberty. By day and by night we would ponder the subject, revolving innumerable plans for escape.

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So it was with us one after another, we proposed, discussed and abandoned, or if occasionally tried resulted in failure and punishment. Indeed it was a difficult feat to attain ones freedom under the circumstances. Examine the map of the country and you will find that our prison was separated by hundreds of miles from the nearest point to the Federal lines. We were surrounded by a guard at once vigilant and vindictive. In the performance of its duties this guard was ably seconded by a pack of bloodhounds. These dogs made the circuit of the prison every morning and rarely failed to discover the trail of any poor devil who had succeeded in eluding the guard during the preceeding night, and once scented, the pack would go bellowing through the woods, only to return with the recaptured prisoner, jaded, weary and sick at heart. Not withstanding all these difficulties and perils however, men made their escape occasionally to our lines, and it is the narrative of one such instance that the writer now addresses himself.

On the 9th day of April, 1864, General Banks generously turned over a portion of his command to General Dick Taylor, this was the result of the affair at Sabin Cross Roads, near Mansfield, LA. These men were escorted to Camp Ford prison, and among the number were Albert Patrick Co. G and Robert Burke, Co. I, of the 67th regiment, Indiana Infantry Volunteers. A little later, on the 25th of the same month, and as a further result of the brilliant generalship of Gen. Banks, a portion of Gen. Steels command was captured by the Rebels, among others: M. S. Real, Martin Tucker, George H. Tucker, Mike Tucker and Emery D. Behen, all of Co. E First Indiana Calvary.

M. S. Real, the Tucker brothers and Patrick in no long time succeeded in getting out of the stockade, but they were recaptured with the hounds and returned. Soon after this they drifted

together in prison and a more elaborate plan to escape was resolved upon. They determined upon burrowing out. For the reader to understand how this was finally accomplished it is necessary to go back a little. When the men were first confined in prison they were assigned certain quarters, and they were permitted to construct their rude shelter. This usually consisted of a mud tent made in this way: the Rebel commander would send out a squad of prisoners under guard to the woods, and they would cut and carry in poles, forks and brush. With these materials they would make the frame work for their huts, then cover them with earth, and the habitations were complete. These served as a protection from the heat of the sun, and partially from the rain. Now our plan was to dig a tunnel from one of these huts under the stockade. To do this it was necessary to select a point as near the "dead line" as possible, and an arrangement was made with a squad of the Fifth Kansas Cavalry, who occupied desirable grounds for the purpose. Accordingly a hut was built with a thin layer of earth in daylight and under the eye of the guard a few paces distant. Then the ground for the tunnel was first

broken with a spade, one of the men had stolen from the Rebels, by digging a hole nearly three feet square and six feet deep in the center of the hut.

This was done at night, and the dirt was either deposited on the hut or taken a safe distance and disposed of upon others. At this point the spade had to be abandoned as it was too large to work with, and a butcher knife which one of the men had secreted was brought into use. Soon it became a serious problem how to get the earth out. The person digging was making a hole barely large enough to crawl into, in which he could not turn, and from which he had to emerge backwards. The following device was resorted to: a small sled was made with a pen knife. To this sled with a capacity of one cubic foot of earth, a rope was attached. Then the person whose turn it was to work would enter the tunnel, pulling the sled after him, his confederate in the hut holding the other end of the rope. After the sled was filled by means of the butcher knife and a wooden paddle, the miner would give a jerk as a signal, and it would be withdrawn by the men in the hut, its contents disposed of and the sled returned. It was found that a man could fill the sled from one to three times before coming out for fresh air. The men worked naked in the tunnel so as not to leave marks of fresh earth on their clothes, which might lead to discovery. And so the work progressed slowly and laboriously. Many of the men became discouraged, and for fear of detection it was given out that the work had been abandoned. At the end of near two months, however, it was so far completed that it was only necessary to break ground on the outside.

About this time a rumor of the work reached the ears of the Rebels and they instituted a search to ascertain the truth of the matter.

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Southern Escape — Cont.

When they looked into this hut a sick man was lying across the mouth of the tunnel on his bunk, and thus this new danger was avoided. Under a plea that he desired to work on a hospital then in the process of erection, Martin Tucker was permitted to pass out. The work was under charge of a major of the Union forces. To him Tucker divulged his secret, and the major took him up near where the tunnel was expected to extend and by having a man in the tunnel, they ascertained that they had gone far enough. Tucker soon returned to his quarters within the stockade and arrangements were cautiously perfected for their escape.

At this time there were probably 40 men all told who knew of the project, of whom 35 had determined to take advantage of the opportunity to try to escape. They were divided up into squads of from three to five persons, each with a separate plan of action and different routes to take. Our squad was third on the program exit, and on the night of September 27, 1864, as the Rebel patrol was crying the hour: "Half past ten o'clock, post number nine, and all is well," I, the last of our squad, passed out. On emerging from the ground outside, the first object that caught my eye

was the dark figure of the guard sharply outlined against the sky.

Looking cautiously down the slope, I saw the track made by my predecessors through the grass, and I crawled silently away into the darkness to join my companions in the woods. Then we set out at a rapid pace in the direction of Natchez. From then until morning we hurried forward through the forest, through brush, over logs, often entangled in the luxuriant briar and falling headlong, but rising and hastening on desperately, resolved to strain every nerve to achieve liberty. Just as we ascended a gentle hill in the morning the glorious sunlight burst upon us with a brilliance of light. By common consent we halted and gazed with admiration upon the scene.

While in prison we succeeded in making a clandestine purchase of some beef neck, upon this we made a frugal breakfast and resumed our march.

The duty of providing a map of our route had been assigned me, there was but one known to be in the stockade, and this after much persuasion Tucker succeeded in borrowing for a short time. A page of note paper was greased so as to render it as nearly transparent as possible, then it was put upon the map and the counties, towns, river, lakes and principal highways between Tyler, TX and Natchez, MS were transcribed thereon. This rude map was invaluable to us. We

consulted it daily, and thus kept in our minds a tolerably clear idea of our whereabouts during our long march.

In marching we kept in single file, usually from one to four rods apart, but at times much farther when the country was populous. We had a signal which we used only in case of danger. It was a sharp hiss, and when it was given by one of the men each threw himself to the ground, and the necessary steps were taken to avoid the obstacle. We spoke only in whispers. When we came to a road we threw a stone or piece of wood in upon which we could step and spring across without leaving any any tell-tale footprints. Houses and plantations were carefully avoided whenever it was possible to do so. While traveling each one of us engaged to keep looking to the right and left scanning every object in sight with the utmost scrutiny, so that we might not be taken unawares. The Tucker brothers had been acting as scouts so much before they were captured, that they were as vigilant as birds of prey. During the hundreds of miles we tramped through the enemies country, they never relaxed their vigilance and they never failed to discover the enemy in time to elude him. They were each versed in all those qualities that

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CCHGS Christmas Party

On Monday, December 8th at the English Senior Citizens building, the society gathered for a short meeting and then a sumptuous dinner provided by the ladies. A white elephant gift exchange was also held.

A presentation was made by Jim Kaiser as a representative of the Crawford County Community Foundation, of a check to the Proctor House Committee for the tucking and painting of the house. Those present to receive the check were Hugh and Evelyn Jackson, Richard Eastridge and Larry Young. Not present was Bob and Mary Wiseman.



Some of the crowd at the party.



Some of the Proctor House Committee with Jim Kaiser.

Southern Escape — Cont.

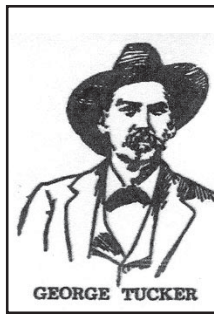
situation demanded, and our success was chiefly owing to their prudence, caution and perseverance.

But to return to our journey. We went forward as rapidly as our circumstances would permit, and the day closed without incident. At night we slept a few hours on the ground and then began our march again, greatly refreshed. The stars were shining brightly, and taking our directions by their friendly light, we hurried on with renewed hope.

The remainder of that night and all the second day we marched with untiring industry, and at night threw ourselves to the earth and were soon sleeping soundly. We were awakened before morning by the rain, wet and chilled, but we resumed our tramp with hearts full of thankfulness for that shower. We felt that the bloodhounds could no longer follow us, and that our greatest danger was passed. And this was literally true. We learned afterwards that the guards were alarmed the very night we escaped by one of the men, a burly fellow getting fast in the tunnel, losing his presence of mind and getting up and running down the road in plain view of the guard. He was fired upon and the camp alarmed. The next morning the guards were put on our trail, and all the men retaken but our squad, and another of three men, who escaped to Little Rock, Ark. So that rain was doubtless our deliverance. During this day we had great difficulty in passing through farms to avoid discovery, and early in the forenoon we ascended a slight hill and beheld a sight that gave us much uneasiness. About half a mile distant was a small village, the county seat of Shelby county, and between us and the town were pitched the white tents of a Rebel camp. Fortunately they had no pickets thrown out and we escaped observation, hastily retracing our steps into the woods a short distance, we made a detour to the left and sought to pass the town in that way. The woods generally became more



M. S. REAL



GEORGE TUCKER

open and had it not been for the small pine undergrowth, we would not have succeeded. As it was, Tucker advanced to reconnoitre while we remained in concealment. Suddenly we saw him fall to the ground, and almost immediately a horseman came into sight. It was the village physician, and he had his pill bags across his saddle.

The road ran within almost two rods of where Tucker lay and discovery seemed almost certain. The man held his head down and was apparently in a profound study. The horse saw Tucker as he came opposite him and shied, but the doctor simply growled his displeasure without looking up and passed on. Then one at a time, we crossed the road and came to a halt, a safe distance beyond in the timber. This was the great highway running between Shreveport, LA and Houston, TX. We discussed the expediency of cutting the telegraph wire that ran along it, and decided that it would be unwise and foolhardy to attempt it. Passing on a little before sunset, we came to a dry bed of a branch, and our rations having been greatly reduced, we resolved to parch a little corn we had plucked by the wayside. Kindling a small fire and improvising a skillet from the half of a canteen and a stick, we parched it full twice, when the sounding of a horn in the distance put a sudden stop to our proceedings. Almost immediately the baying of hounds followed. Hastily stamping out our fire we fled from the spot. In a short time we discovered that the dogs were approaching along the route we came, and our fears were that they were on our trail. Nearer and nearer they came until nothing but the thick pine bushes

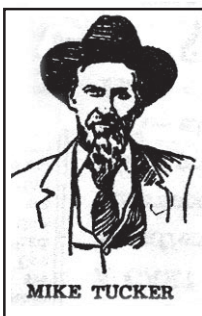
screened us from their view. The forest reverberated with their voices, and we almost despaired of our power to elude them, still we increased our speed to a run. It was a run for life, and just as the sun sank below the horizon, the horn sounded again and we heard the hounds no more. We continued our journey far into the night.

Nothing out of the usual course occurred from thence until we came to Sabine river. This stream was not very wide nor very deep, and we crossed it readily enough by taking off our clothes and carrying them upon our heads. Once across we found ourselves in the heavy timber of the Sabine bottoms. It was cloudy and we wandered on slowly trying to direct our course by the moss which is said to grow most abundant on the north side of trees. It grew all around the trees of the Sabine bottoms, and we went forward with great difficulty. On that day our rations gave out and we were pressed by hunger. We had husbanded our rations as much as possible by foraging berries, sweet potatoes and corn and from this time forward that was our only resources. The following day we came in sight of Mansfield, where six months before Gen. Banks was defeated so ignoramusly. We came upon some wood choppers in the timber near town, and to avoid discovery crawled into some brush heaps and lay there in concealment until nightfall, then we again fell into line and moved forward. In crossing a plantation we passed through a citron patch and gorged ourselves with this unsavory fruit. After going some miles, we stopped for the night, but being alarmed by the whistle of a farmer, we blundered on in the darkness. The night was far advanced when we halted again deep down in the forest and threw ourselves upon the ground in utter exhaustion. When we awoke the sun was already up,

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Southern Escape — Cont.

and favored by the heavy timber, we made rapid headway until we were again greatly alarmed by some hunters with their dogs at no great distance from us. After a time, they passed out of range and we felt much relieved. We saw a number of deer that day. Coming near them they would raise their heads and look at us in wild surprise then bound away through the forest. We envied them their fleetness and freedom, but they too were hunted mercilessly. Before sunset we heard the rush of water and thought we were in hearing of the Red river, but we found that it was the outlet of a small lake. The stream was wide, deep and swift. Patrick's heart failed him and he refused to swim it. He wanted to follow down the stream thus deviating from our course, but we urged him to strip and prepare to pass over it at once, and he reluctantly did so. Behen crossed first, pushing his own and the Tucker brothers clothing before him on a light piece of wood. I followed with Patrick's clothes and my own after providing the latter with a chunk of wood as a life preserver. He started in and considering his raft of no service he let go of it, and boldly struck out for the farther shore. When two thirds of the way over he cried out for help, and Behen hurried to his assistance with a piece of timber and brought him to shore. The Tucker brothers, neither of whom could swim, after drifting far down stream finally succeeded in paddling their way across. We then dressed and traveled on until we came to a large plantation. Rightly surmising that this was near Red River, we deemed it imprudent to go until night. When night came we pressed forward and soon found ourselves on the banks of the Red River where we lay down for a time to consider our situation. We were tired and ravenous with hunger. After a brief consultation we cautiously picked our way down the river toward the planter resi-



dence. We came to a sweet potato patch and began pulling up the potatoes and filling our haver sacks, when suddenly we were startled by the following words "Please gentlemens I se heah to guad dese taters." Looking in the direction whence came the sound we faced a stalwart black man. With one mind we immediately gathered about him, and told him who we were and that we were determined to let nothing stand between us and our liberty. That if he was friendly to us and to our enterprise all would be well, if not he must prepare to take the consequences, and we pointed to the dark river rolling at our feet. But our threats were unnecessary, as soon as he became convinced of our identity, he assured us that he was our friend, that we should supply ourselves with all the potatoes we needed, and he would show us how to cross the river. At that moment we discovered that he had a companion in the nature of a bright looking black woman. She came close and starred at us in open-mouthed wonder while we talked with the man. Then she broke out with "Lord bless youh soles chillens. I will never tell on you while I live."

After we had helped ourselves to the potatoes we wanted, they directed us to the ferry, a short distance below, and we bid them a hearty goodbye. These were the first persons who had seen us during our long march, so far as I knew, and they befriended us in such a manner as to lay us under obligations while we live.

We found the ferry without difficulty and hauled ourselves across by means of a cable thrown over the river, and set forward with rising spirits. For fear of discovery, we marched all night long and

all the day following. In the evening, we had another scare from hearing the sound of a horn, of the hunter doubtless, and deep baying of hounds behind us. Again we urged ourselves forward into a run, and kept traveling from thence in great haste until we came to the margin of a small lake, perhaps two miles in diameter. An old sow and a litter of pigs were rooting in the grass near the lake and we made a dash for her brood. One of the Tuckers was the only person among us all who had the strength enough left to succeed. He caught one of the pigs after a smart chase, and we plunged boldly into the lake, and as it was not deep, waded it, and emerged from the slimy waters just at dusk. We plodded on for several hours, until we found ourselves so deep into the forest, that listening we heard no sign of life. Then we halted and built a small fire in a sheltered spot and began to prepare our supper. We had some sweet potatoes and we had our pig. The only knife owned by the party had been lost soon after leaving prison, and we were greatly perplexed as to how we should dress our little porker, when Tucker caught up our canteen skillet and breaking off a slip of tin from it, soon improvised a knife. With this he succeeded in disemboweling master piggy, and after wringing off the hair and bristles, he was spitted on a stick and roasted.

Charles Lamb in his essay on "Roast Pig," has depicted in a lively manner how this delicacy was first discovered, and the crazy delight with which Chinese welcomed the dish, even to burning their houses in order to prepare it. In our situation we were in condition to appreciate the author's essay, and if anything, declare it short of the truth. Never while we live, shall we forget how delicious that meal was — roast pig and sweet potatoes! After supper we lay down for a little rest. We had been traveling steadily almost from the time we crossed Red river,

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and we had only halted a short time then, so that our fatigue was very great. We soon fell into a profound sleep, from which I was awakened with a shock to find my shirt on fire. I had no blouse or blanket and I lay down close to the fire and as the night advanced I grew chilly and crowded the fire so closely that it caught my shirt, when I awoke, it had already burned a hole in it on my back as large as the crown of my hat; the men extinguished it and it being nearly morning we set forward again. This was the second Sunday since our escape from prison, and we determined to make an early halt if we could find a suitable spot, and refresh ourselves with a long rest.

Coming to another lake, we undertook to cross it without deviating from our course, but the sword grass was so high, sharp and thick that we could not penetrate it above a few hundred yards, and we were compelled to retrace our steps and pass around the lake to the right. This we did, crossing the outlet of the lake and going unto camp near the edge of the lake in the forest while it was still hours until nightfall. Here Tucker gave chase to a flock of wild turkeys, but failed to capture any of them. Early next morning we journeyed on and marched far into the night without incident. After we went into camp, we parched some corn on the remains of our canteen skillet for the morrow. The following day we traveled perseveringly, and our way being through a country sparsely inhabited, we made considerable progress, crossing Little river shortly after dark. As we came out of the water two dogs pursued us some distance barking loudly. They belonged to a farmer whose cabin we did not discover, owing to the darkness, until after the dogs gave chase to us. When they ceased following us and quit barking, we cautiously returned and foraged some sweet potatoes from their owner,

and again set out on our weary march again.

Nothing unusual occurred during the following day to break the monotony of our march, but on the next day about noon, we reached the Washita river. Below us and perhaps three fourths of a mile distant we could plainly see a planter's house and near it a number of cottages occupied by the plantation hands. During the afternoon we saw a black man drive out into the timber at no great distance from us, and we resolved to apply to him for aid. Two of the men approached him autonomously, and finding him friendly, they told him who we were and that we were anxious to cross the river. He agreed to come to us after dark and take us to the ferry. Punctual to his engagement, he came and conducted us first to his cabin where he generously regaled us with cornbread and bacon from his frugal stores, thence to the ferry hard by. He paddled us across the river in a frail "dug-out," making two trips of it. In crossing the river the residence of the Madame (it was a widow's plantation) rising white and stately, the neat cottages of the blacks were leaving behind, the silent river sparkling in the starlight as a silver band emerging from the gloom, and disappearing in the darkness, our grim and sooty oarsman suggesting Choron crossing the Styx, and the sense of danger, the present knowledge of our proximity to the Union lines then scarcely a days travel distant, all conspired to render the scene most weird and impressive. We took our leave of our sable friend with the liveliest feeling of gratitude for his assistance and sympathy we received at his house. Then turning our faces toward Natchez we pressed on with our hearts bounding with hope, and cheered with the inexpressible sweetness of the thought of an early realization of our hope — in freedom. We traveled all night but owing to the number of obstacles we met with in the brush and timber of the river bottoms, made but little progress. However the next morning found us in the vicinity of the Tensas river, which then

marked the line of the Rebel forces in that part of the country.

Early in the afternoon as we were cautiously approaching a house on the bank of the river we saw a colored boy emerge from it and scrambled upon a horse that had been hitched outside, he galloped away. Believing that we had been discovered and that the youth was going to sound the alarm of our presence, we sprang from the fence behind which we had been trying to screen ourselves, and boldly ran for the river, what was our astonishment and mortification to find the ferry boat out in the middle of the stream, and full of water. Holding a hurried consultation we determined to send one man into the house to see who occupied it, the other members of our squad to remain on the bank of the river, ready to swim for our lives if necessary. Tucker volunteered to enter the house, and did so. In a few minutes he returned to us with the information that no persons were there but darkies, but that they were expecting the Rebel patrol every minute. The old black man told him we should conceal ourselves in the cotton gin until night when he promised to come to us and take us down the river to another ferry. We lost no time in hurrying to the gin house and covered our persons with a mass of loose raw cotton we found there. In a very short time afterwards we heard the patrol coming. They rode past our place of concealment, their sabers and accoutrements clanking ominously, dismounted, hitched their horses and entered the house. Slowly and tediously the weary hours wore away until night enfolded us in her shadows and we crept out of our hiding place to meet the old black man. He finally came to our infinite relief and we cautiously stole away. After going half a mile or more we entered a small cabin where we were introduced to some other darkies who

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stared at us with eyes filled with astonishment and unbelief. When they came to understand that we were genuine “Yanks” they gave us some corn bread and bacon and bade us God speed in our strike for liberty. We left the cabin and passed hurriedly down to the river. To our great regret the ferry boat which was nothing more than a simple “dugout” was on the opposite side of the river. I was requested to swim for it, and hastily divesting myself of my clothes, I plunged quickly into the cold dark water. Soon the boat was reached and the men all set over without an accident and we turned our faces toward Natchez — the Promised Land.

We halted twice near the river at some black cabins and obtained further information in relation to our forces. A same detachment had that day at noon been on that particular plantation and driven off some cattle. They also told us they were momentarily expecting two hundred Rebel guerillas then known to be in that vicinity. So we stood not upon the order of our going, but went rapidly. In a short time we found ourselves upon the great road leading to Natchez. We pulled off our shoes that we might make as little noise as possible, and for the first time since leaving Camp Ford prison marched on a highway. We traveled single file as usual, and about 75 yards apart. The moon was shining and about two o’clock in the morning we saw a picket far down the road. After holding a consultation we resolved that one man should advance, and if it was not a Federal guard he was to give us an alarm signal and we were to leave the road and try to make our way to Natchez separately the best we could. Tucker advanced slowly towards the sentinel, and after approaching within 75 yards he was discovered. “Halt!” Rang out on the still night air. “Who comes there?” “Union prisoners escaped from Camp Ford prison near Tyler, Texas,” replied Tucker. “How

many are there of you?” said the guard. “Five,” answered Tucker. “Remain where you are until the guards turn out.” Then there was a clatter of horse hoofs going, and soon the rest of the pickets dashed up. “Advance one” said the sentinel. Tucker advanced and soon we could see him standing in their midst, earnestly talking to them — then the welcome words. “Advance one at a time” by the guard. In a short time we found ourselves in the presence of a score of rough long-haired scouts dressed in citizens clothes, and armed with shot guns and sabres. I, who was the last one to reach the guard, gave up all for lost, thought they were Rebel guerillas into whose merciless hands we had fallen, after having almost reached the haven of our hopes. But the words “Well, come men I know you must be hungry, we shall conduct you to camp, where you shall have some hot coffee,” undeceived me, and I experienced a revulsion of feeling correspondingly great. The next morning we awoke to find ourselves beneath the folds of the old flag. With bared heads we took it in our arms and passionately kissed its dear old stripes and stars. At that moment it meant our homes, our friends and our loved ones there, it meant liberty and our country, and all that we held dearest, and loved best, and God save us, may it never mean less!

We were within ten miles of Natchez. A courier had been sent forward early in the morning to the city to announce our arrival. When we crossed the river and entered the city we found a vast concourse of people assembled on the streets to see the “escaped prisoners.” I suppose they felt repaid for their pains, for we were indeed a curious spectacle. Poor Behen could hardly walk; his feet were swollen to a frightful size, the effects of our long march. Our clothing was a mixture of texture and color. For example, I wore a white Rebel hat run up to a point like a clown’s, a Rebel shirt, butternut colored, with a large hole burned in the back; my uniform trousers, but patched and torn beyond recognition. My feet were sock-less and

my insteps and ankles torn and bleeding from striking greenbriars that grew so luxuriantly along the route we traveled and I had on a pair of Rebel shoes. The other men were about similarly dressed. As we passed along some person stepped out of the crowd of lookers on, and handed one of our men ten dollars requesting him to divide it among us. We thanked him for his generosity. He did not realize from our condition that we were perhaps the happiest men in Natchez at that moment.

My story is now ended. In a day or so at most we separated at Natchez to go our several ways. God save the Flag of our country.

Camp Ford, Texas

Camp Ford was a prisoner of war camp near Tyler, Texas, during the American Civil War. It was the largest Confederate-run prison west of the Mississippi River.

Established in the spring of 1862 as a training camp for new Confederate recruits, the camp was named for Col. John Salmon Ford, a Texas Ranger and the Superintendent of Conscripts for the State of Texas. The first handful of Union prisoners did not arrive until August 1863. The captives were initially held in the open, but a panic ensued in November 1863 when 800 new prisoners threatened a mass breakout. A military stockade enclosing four acres was soon erected.

With over 2,000 new prisoners taken in Louisiana on April 8 and 9, 1864, at the battles of Mansfield, and Pleasant Hill, the stockade was quadrupled in size. With more prisoners captured in Arkansas, the prison’s population peaked at about 5,000 in July 1864. The population was reduced by exchanges in July and October 1864, and again in February 1865. The last 1,761 prisoners were exchanged on May 22, 1865.

During the course of the war, the total number of prisoners who passed through the camp was slightly more than 5,500. About 327 prisoners died in captivity, giving the camp a mortality rate of 5.9%, one of the lowest of any Civil

MORE On Page 12

Minutes of Meeting of November 2008

A regular meeting of CCHGS was held on November 10, 2008 at the Crawford County Junior-Senior High School in the media room with President Densil Wilson presiding. The meeting began with all the veterans present being recognized.

Richard Eastridge then showed us the various items that were purchased at the Stephenson's store and Barbara Dillman Jones auctions. Richard had been given \$200. in donations along with a donation of up to \$500 from the society. The total spent was \$585. Hugh Jackson made the motion with Don Standiford seconding to pay Richard the difference of \$85. The motion carried. Densil Wilson made the motion to have Richard Eastridge store the items bought in his garage until a more suitable place is available, the motion carried. Priscilla Eastridge made Thank You cards to be signed and sent to the people who donated money for the auctions and for the donation of the Riceville Depot.

Densil Wilson made the motion to accept the **October minutes** as read, the motion carried.

Sharon Morris gave the **financial report**. The beginning balance on October 13, 2008 was \$14,263.86 with an ending balance of \$14,183.61. Densil Wilson made the motion to accept the report as given and the motion carried.

Hugh and Evelyn Jackson gave the **Proctor House report**. The well has been pulled and the depth of the water is 104 feet. There is still some work to be done on the sucker rod and cylinder. Glenn Creclius has leveled a spot for the Riceville Depot and cleaned up a brush pile. Densil Wilson asked if any estimates have been received on the pole building. Larry Young has been to four different estab-

lishments, but has not heard back from any of them at this time.

Jim Kaiser reported that the Society did receive the **grant from the Crawford County Community Foundation**. \$3900. will be used for painting and \$1500. for tucking the brick at the Proctor House. A progress report must be given to the Foundation within six months to a year.

The Proctor House financial report was given by Evelyn Jackson. The beginning balance was \$7,330.01 with an ending balance of \$7,077.42 on November 6, 2008.

Roberta Toby had spent the day at the library helping Becky Hammond Stetter in getting the **Hero tree** ready for a program that will be held at the library on November 11, 2008 at 2:00 p.m. Becky is still accepting pictures of local veterans to put into an album for the library.

Betsy Young gave the **ornament report**. There were eight ornaments sold at the sorghum festival for \$64. minus a \$6 booth fee for a total of \$58. Also one Proctor House ornament was sold and paid for. Priscilla Eastridge gave the report from the Sorghum Festival. Total items sold was \$350.05, minus \$20. to Larry Burmeister for printing and \$35. for percentage of sales for a total of \$315.05.

On **Publications**, Larry Burmeister has the 2009 calendars ready to order. The price to members is \$8. Roberta Toby suggested that one of everything the Society makes, such as books, calendars, ornaments, etc. be kept by the Society as part of their history.

Bill Piper gave the **web-site report**. The survey book and old pictures are being added. Jim Kaiser asked if the Society had any liability concerning pictures on the site, such as copyright laws or from individual families. Bill Piper and/or Roberta Toby will contact the attorney to get more information. Larry Burmeister gave the **newsletter and archives report**. The newsletter will be out in December. The archives had 4 visitors, and total cash on hand is \$58.75. The dehumidifier

at the archives is not working at this time. Larry will talk to the Commissioners to see what can be done.

Richard Eastridge gave the **Historian Report**. Since the article appeared in the local paper about the Shield's stones being set at Riddle Cemetery, a third stone has been found. Someone in Hardinsburg has the stone and said they bought it at English about 20 years ago. Ninety-three of the new Crawford County Historical Survey Books have been sold at this time.

Mr. Jim Lucas has been in contact with Densil Wilson, and he will be present at the January or February meeting to present the Civil War sword.

Priscilla Eastridge made the motion to have a **Christmas Party** with Betty Gunn seconding the motion. The motion carried. Sandy Wilson made the motion to have the party on the same night and time of our regular meeting in December. Jim Kaiser seconded the motion, and the motion carried. The party will be held on Monday, December 8, 2008 at the Senior Citizens Building. Betty Gunn suggested making reservations for the building for the Establishment Day Dinner. The motion was made by Jim Kaiser and seconded by Richard Eastridge to have the **Establishment Day Dinner** on February 28, 2009 if the building is available.

Roger Gleitz has invited everyone to his wedding on December 22, 2008. Congratulations to Robin Witt and Bill Piper on their recent marriage.

Those attending were: Edith Key, Evelyn Jackson, Roger Gleitz, Satterfield, L. Grant, Hugh E. Jackson, William Piper, Jr., Robin Piper, Casey Blair, Densil R. Wilson, Larry M. Burmeister, Richard Eastridge, Sandra Wilson, Priscilla Eastridge, Betty J. Gunn, Anita Mitchell, Doris Kaiser, Betsy Young, Larry Young,

MORE on next page

November Minutes: Cont.

Helena Burmeister, Glen Toby, Jim Kaiser, Roberta Toby, Ruth Terry, Harry Wood, Donald Standiford, Janice Eastridge, and Sharon Morris.

Minutes of Meeting of December 2008

The Crawford County Historical and Genealogical Society met on December 8, 2008 at the Senior Citizens Building in English. A short business meeting was held before the Christmas party. President Densil Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. In old business bills were presented by Betty Gunn for \$59.56 for supplies needed for the Christmas party, and Larry Burmeister \$86.32 for the December newsletter.

Community Foundation Presents Check To CCHGS

Jim Kaiser, as representative for the Crawford County Community Foundation, presented the Proctor House committee members present: Hugh & Evelyn Jackson, Richard Eastridge and Larry Young, with a check in the amount of \$5,400.00. These funds to be used for the tucking of brick and painting of the Proctor House.

Sales from the Crawford County Survey book total \$6,525.00. There are about 100 books left.

In new business Larry Burmister passed around a hat to collect money for the rental of the building for the Christmas party.

The meeting was adjourned and Jim Kaiser gave the blessing for the

meal. Everyone enjoyed a delicious meal and desserts, gag gifts were opened and Edith Key played the piano while Christmas carols were sung.

Those attending were: Larry & Helena Burmeister, Becky Hammond Stetter, Hugh E. & Evelyn Jackson, Larry & Betsy Young, Norma Spears, Mary E. Snelling, E. Lambdin, Katherine Cook, Anita Mitchell, Jeff Mitchell, Louie & Diane Mitchell, Carol Sue Madley, Jim & Doris Kaiser, Harry Wood, Densil R. & Sandra Wilson, William & Robin Piper, Casey Blair, John Rogers, Janice Eastridge, Glen & Roberta Toby, Richard & Priscilla Eastridge, Betty Gunn, Edith Key, Ruth Terry and Lois Blevins.



Photo from tin-type owned by Richard Eastridge

FAMILY OF DAVID MORTON & MARIA CATHERINE CURL LASWELL, abt. 1892-1894

Back Row, left to right: Albert M. "Dink", Peter Edward, David Sherman, David Morton, Mary G. STROUD King, Doc Newton King (step-brother). Front Row: Elzada Jane Laswell, Sarah Grace SCOTT, w/o Peter, Emma Eva K. CLINGMAN, w/o Sherman, Mariah Catherine CURL Laswell, w/o David M., Lula M. King, dau. of Newton King. Children on lap, left to right: Jessie Leah, dau. of D.S. & Emma Eva; Elizabeth Catherine, dau. of D.S. & Emma. Identifications by Henry Laswell and Richard Eastridge and they do not swear to their exactness! David Morton Laswell served in the Civil War, 23rd Regiment Infantry Indiana Volunteers, Co. H. from 1861 to 1865 he returned home blind from disease.

Minutes of Meeting of January 2009

The Crawford County Historical & Genealogical Society met on Jan. 12 with President Densil Wilson presiding.

Edith Key had several items present that were given to the society by Collene Andry. Some of the items were: an 1853 tax document, Marengo Observer subscription, receipt from the Marengo Bank, and some obituaries.

Due to December's meeting being the Christmas party no minutes were read.

The **financial report** was given by Sharon Morris, treasurer. The beginning balance on Dec. 9 2008 was \$18,385.21 with an ending balance on Jan. 12, 2009 of \$20,594.52. The report was accepted as read.

The **Proctor House financial report** was given by Hugh Jackson. The balance on Nov. 6, 2008 was \$7,077.42 with an ending balance of \$12,541.92.

Barbara Dillman Jones donated funeral home guest books to the society. They are in the care of Bobby and Mary Wiseman at this time.

An **ornament report** was given by Betsy Young. Six ornaments were sold at the Crawford County Craft Fair. Total for the month was \$209.54.

Total sales of the **Survey Book** are \$7,045. There are about 50 books left. Richard Eastridge made the motion, with Sandra Wilson seconding, to send a check for the \$7,000. owed on the Survey Books, which was advanced by the County Commissioners, to the County Auditor. The motion carried.

Membership report: There are about 97 paid members at this time.

Edith Key read a thank you note from Evelyn Jackson, and Larry Burmeister read an e-mail from Donnie Roberts of Florida concerning the web site.

Web Site: Photos are being added

Letters & E-Mail

Hi Larry

Thank you and Richard Eastridge for all your work of photographing and putting all those cemeteries on-line. I was able to find where Volley Speedy his wife Jennie Kellems Speedy and young daughter are buried in Gilmore Cemetery. Also some of the Newton clan. I have amassed a large amount of info on James the polygamist Kellems (my) family and allied families. I am working at getting it in to book form. I hope to come up to Crawford County this next spring if gas stays at a reasonable price. If you have any questions about the Kellems Clan please ask. I can be reached at clintkellems@yahoo.com.

David C. Kellems

Hi Roberta

I just wanted to tell you how great the CCHGS website is now, with the cemetery section and other photo sections. That cemetery section helped me quite a bit with the Mock family. Also recording the meetings is nice, since I can't be there in person for a meeting, it allows me to "kinda be there." I noticed the old Courthouse group picture is posted. The man in the third row, farthest right is Greenville Satterfield, my GGrandpa.

I can't wait to come up to do some more digging at the archives. Hopefully this Spring but maybe later toward the Summer. This time I will be concentrating on the Mock, Scott, Levell, Sturgeon and Roberts' of English.

Donnie Roberts

by our webmaster, Bill Piper.

Archives Report: Roberta Toby suggested moving things around at the archives so that all visitors have to enter through the office. It will also open things up so that visitors can be observed better. Someone will attend the next Commissioners meeting to ask if this can be done.

New Business: Hugh Jackson has called about the bill that is owed for

the well being pulled. It should be available by the next meeting.

Larry Burmeister suggested that research be done on the "lost towns" of Crawford County, along with a list of primary and secondary records of the history of Crawford County.

February 28, 2009 is the Founders Day Dinner.

February is also Black History Month and Richard Eastridge will try to get an article in the *Clarion* in February on black history, maybe the two black cemeteries in Crawford County, one in Jerico area and the other in Fredonia.

Those attending were: Sharon Morris, William & Robin Piper, Edith Key, Bob & Mary Wiseman, Jim Kaiser, Hugh E. Jackson, Betty J. Gunn, Anita Mitchell, Helena Burmeister, Glen & Roberta Toby, Betsy Young, Sandra Wilson, Richard & Priscilla Eastridge, Larry Burmeister, Densil R. Wilson, and Janice Eastridge.

Letters & E-Mail

Hello, While reading through the history of the Proctor House on the Crawford County Historical and Genealogical Society website, I saw mention that William Proctor ran a store at that location. It is mentioned that Richard Eastridge has a list of some of the customers beginning in 1833. I am interested in obtaining a copy of that list. I have been researching the Suddarth family and related families for about 10 years now. I am beginning to expand my research into other families and into the general history of the county in the first part of the 19th century and the migration of families from Kentucky into Crawford County. I would be very interested in a copy of the customer list and would like to know how I may go about obtaining a copy. Thank you very much for your help.

David W. Suddarth
St. Paul, MN

Obits from *The English News*.

**1917—May 4th
Nancy A. Lamon**

Nancy A. Lamon was born March 16, 1839, died April 27, 1917, aged 78 years, one month and eleven days.



Photo from Louie Mitchell

She was married to William Hammonds in 1854, who gave up his life for his country during the civil war, leaving her to face life's battles alone with three little children, which have also preceded her in death. She was again married to Aaron Lamon in 1865, and to this union five children were born, George, Eliza, Elisha, Bell and Lydia, whom all survive her.

Funeral services were held at Bethany church, April 29th, conducted by Rev. Myers McKinney, of Marion.

1917—May 11

James W. Temple Dies

James W. Temple, a well known and well respected citizen of Temple, son of David and Emeline Temple, was

born in Spencer county, Nov. 20, 1850, and departed this life May 6, 1917, age 66 years, five months and sixteen days. He was united in marriage to Sallie Robertson, May 5, 1879, and he and his devoted wife lived happy together for 39 years.

To this union seven children were born, five of whom are living, two of whom have passed on to the better world waiting to welcome their father Home. He became a member of the M.E. church at Temple in the year 1902, and was a faithful member until Jesus called him to rest. He was afflicted with tuberculosis for several years, and took his bed Dec. 14, 1916. His sufferings were great, but he bore them with much patience and christian fortitude. He said many times during his illness that he was waiting for the Lord to call him Home, that he was ready and perfectly willing to go any time. He was conscious to the last, calling his dear wife and children to his bedside, told them not to weep for him, for their loss was his gain, and that the toils of this life were all over now, and he was going Home to God, and for them all to meet him in Heaven.

He leaves a wife and five children to mourn their loss, Arthur Temple, of Long Point, Ill.; Mrs. Ollie Real, Horance Temple, Mrs. Opal Sarles and Miss Clara Temple, of Temple, besides a host of other relatives and friends.

**NEW BOOKS
FOR SALE**

Crawford County Indiana Historical Survey and Inventory, published by Historical Landmarks Foundation, Inc., July 2008, soft-bound, 98 pages with many pictures. Cost \$20.00

Crawford County Marriage Index 1818-1996, a new extended index with new entries giving the complete date of marriage. Cost \$40.00.

Index of Estate Records from the Archives. Over 4,000 entries, 116 printed pages in soft-bound book. Compiled by Larry Burmeister. \$15.00.

2009 Calendars featuring some early families of Crawford County: Greenberry Kemp, Walter Q. Ballard, John Lynch, some Poe ancestors, Luke Wood, Wm. H. Jones, Henry Mix, Isaac Mitchell, Peter F. Newton, John Norman, Wm. Limp, and the Bird Family at Proctor House. Jan. 2008 through Jan. 2010. Cost \$12.00. (Only 4 left)

Contact:

Priscilla Eastridge
866 N. Sycamore Road
Taswell, IN 47175.

e-mail: eastridgebig@psci.net.

or check out the Society's website at www.cchgs.org for a complete book list and order form.

ENGLISH ALUMNI BANQUET

April 18, 2009 — 6:30 P.M.

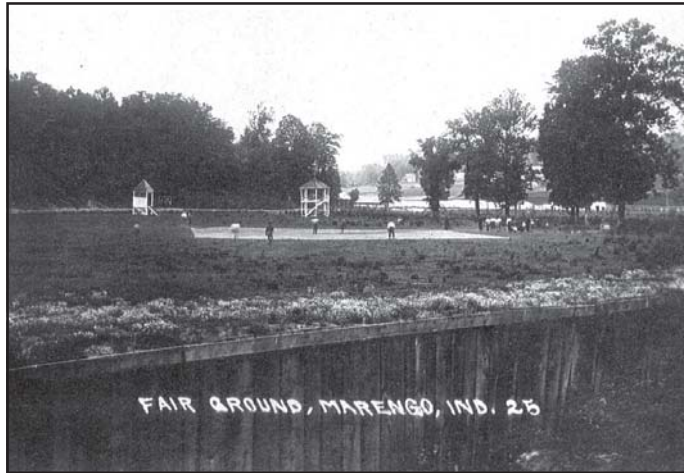
At English Elementary School

(the Old High School)

Send \$15 [by April 4th] Reservation to:

Judy Wade
3850 W. Alstott Road
Taswell, IN 47175
(812) 338-2425

Questions? — djwatas@netzero.net



**Obits from *The English News*.
1917—May 18
Sarah E. Colby**

Sarah E. Colby was born Sept. 29, 1838, and departed this life, May 13, 1917, aged 78 years, seven months and fourteen days. She united in marriage to John H. Nash, Sept. 29, 1859. To this union were born ten children, six of whom survive her. They are John F. and Charles H. Nash, of Riddle; Naomi P. Stroud, of Mifflin; Mary E. Myler, of West Fork; Ada M. Eastridge and Ida E. Tucker, of French Lick. She united with the M.E. church while young and lived a devoted christian life, and often said she was ready to

meet her Savior. She also leaves many relatives and friends to mourn their loss.

Camp Ford—Cont. From Page 7

War prison. The deceased prisoners were reinterred to the Pineville, Louisiana, National Cemetery in 1867.

The prison site is now a historic park managed by the Smith County Historical Society.

(From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

Above photo is a postcard purchased at the Barbara Dillman auction by the society.

ANNUAL EVENTS

- February 28, 2009** ————— **County Establishment Day Dinner and Program**
- July 4th Weekend, 2009** ——— **Fund Raiser at Proctorville**
- July, 2009** ————— **Riverfest at Leavenworth booth**
- September, 2009** ————— **Milltown Fest Old Eckerty Days booth**
- October, 2009** ————— **Sorghum Festival booth**

Dates and times and additional events will be listed in the local newspaper *The Clarion* and on our website. Contact Densil Wilson at 812-338-4261 for information.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Dues for the Crawford County Historical & Genealogical Society are \$15.00 per year. These dues are due in June. The new year starts on July 1st. A renewal form is available on the website at www.chgs.org.

MEETINGS

The Crawford County Historical & Genealogical Society meets on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Meetings are held at the Media Center of the Crawford County High School, located South of Marengo on Highway 66.

WEBSITE

www.cchgs.org

**Crawford County Historical & Genealogical Society
Membership Form**

New Member **\$15.00 Per Year** Renewal
Per Family

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Phone: _____

E-Mail Address _____ Prefer E-mail delivery:

Yes No

Mail to: Priscilla Eastridge, Membership Chairman
866 N. Sycamore Rd.
Taswell, IN 47175

We Thank You For Your Support!