

EARLY FAYETTE COUNTY SCHOOLS

THESIS

(Three Hour Credit)

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

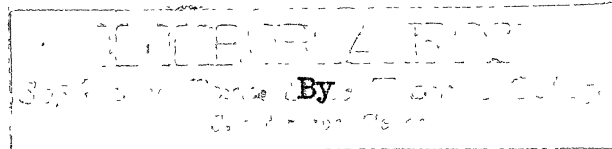
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## EARLY FAYETTE COUNTY SCHOOLS

### CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTION

The aim in writing this thesis is to give the reader some interesting information about the early schools of Fayette County and especially about the first college of higher education in Texas. The writer hopes that those who read this thesis will enjoy it as much as he enjoyed writing it.

The problem is "Early Fayette County Schools." The writer lived most of his life in Fayette County and is very much interested in the early schools of said county. After assembling all of the material collected, the writer thinks he will have an interesting treatise of what proved to him to be a fascinating enterprise.

Texans know that the Mexican Government made no provision for education in Texas. Many of the colonists, however, saw the need of education. They favored elementary schools, academies, and colleges for their youth. They set their minds to an effort to secure these schools. Fayette County colonists, too, were not to be denied in this respect. Their efforts were far from being in vain, as evidenced by the early establishment of schools in various parts of the county. Some of these schools became very prominent and played an

important part in the history of our state. Scholars from different sections of the state attended these schools. The early Fayette County schools were and still are cherished by many Texans.

## CHAPTER II

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

When the first school was established in Fayette County, Texas was still under the Mexican flag. This school was established in a log house on David Breeding's land,<sup>1</sup> which was part of the James Miles grant on Cummins Creek.<sup>2</sup> The school was taught by a Mr. Rutland. Some of the scholars were: Patsie Dougherty, Lyman Alexander, Sally and Marion York, and four sons of Jake Breeding.<sup>3</sup>

In about 1839, when R. E. B. Baylor came to Texas and La Grange, the first school known to have existed in La Grange was established by this noted educator, minister, lawmaker, and jurist. Judge Baylor's school was a small log house that stood on the lot now occupied by the residence of Judge Teichmuller.<sup>4</sup> That same log cabin in which Judge Baylor taught was later used by Mrs. Woodward of Richmond, Virginia.<sup>5</sup>

The only other school in La Grange before 1845 was that of Orin Drake. Mr. Drake's school was of a preparatory nature for girls as well as for boys. The examination, which was held

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1. Sinks, Julia Lee, Chronicles of Fayette, p. 34 MS, University of Texas Archives, 1901.

2. Deed Records of Fayette County, Vol. A, p. 237.

3. Sinks, op. cit., pp. 34 and 96.

4. Sinks, op. cit., p. 96.

5. Sinks, op. cit., p. 96.

on May 24, 1844, was visited by Judge R. E. B. Baylor. He congratulated both teacher and pupils.<sup>6</sup>

The La Grange Casino, which was incorporated by the Legislature of the State of Texas on February 11, 1860,<sup>7</sup> owed ". . . its origin to the sociable disposition of the Germans of La Grange, and their unceasing devotion to the cause of education."<sup>8</sup> The Casino Association erected a building on the west side of the block on which the City Hall and La Grange Post Office are now located. The first teacher of the Casino school was Professor August Jungbecker, "a highly educated man," who spoke English, German, Spanish, and French.<sup>9</sup>

Other La Grange schools were: La Grange Male and Female Seminary and Boarding School, The La Grange Select School, Judge B. B. Hudnall's School, Dr. Shannon's School, and The La Grange Female Institute.<sup>10</sup>

The Fayetteville Academy was conducted in a building which had been erected for church and school purposes in 1848. The first session began in 1849 and Reverend P. B.

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6. La Grange Intelligencer, June 6, 1844, p. 2.

7. Gammel, H. P. N., The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897, Vol. V, p. 223, Austin: The Gammel Book Company, 1898.

8. Sinks, op. cit., p. 117.

9. Willrich, Mr. George, "Notes Taken from Mr. August Streithoff."

10. Walling, Johanna, Early Education in Fayette County, Austin: University of Texas, Masters Thesis, 1941.



Chandler was its principal and teacher. The second principal was the Reverend Doctor W. P. Smith, who served in that capacity for almost four sessions.<sup>11</sup> In advertisements of the school, neither the course of study nor the rates of tuition were given, but the board of trustees stressed the practical nature of the instruction imparted at the Fayetteville Academy.<sup>12</sup>

In an article about Fayetteville written by the correspondent from that town for the La Grange Paper on March 15, 1855, he referred to the schools in the following manner:

Schools, two, one American and one German in town, and in the vicinity two others, all in a flourishing condition--four schools that speak for the thriftiness of our population,--surely we are a scripture fulfilling people.

The "Fayetteville German School" was organized about 1854.<sup>13</sup> In 1856 Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Shaver sold five acres of land, "on which the German School house" was situated, for the sum of sixty-two and one-half dollars to John Flum, Edward Franz and Immanuel Vetter in trust for the Fayetteville School. The land was in Ross Prairie near the town of Fayetteville, as a part of the league of land granted to A. Thompson.<sup>14</sup>

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11. The Texas Monument, September 1, 1852, p. 1.

12. The Texas Monument, January 7, 1852, p. 3.

13. Deed Records of Fayette County, Vol. X, p. 459.

14. Ibid., Vol. L, p. 227.

The Round Top Academy opened its first session on the first Monday of June, 1854.<sup>15</sup> The Reverend T. V. Erwin had charge of the school. For the session of five months at the academy the tuition was from ten to twenty dollars with an extra fee of five dollars for German, Spanish, and French. The incidental fee was one dollar.<sup>16</sup>

The renowned Reverend Adam Neuthard, whose inspiring influence touched the lives of thousands of people, lived at Round Top approximately forty years. Mr. August Bauerkaemper, who was eighty-nine years old (1941) said that his first teacher was the Reverend Neuthard, who taught in a log home near Warrenton before he went to Round Top. Whatever the Reverend Neuthard did, he believed in doing thoroughly. Although, a very staunch Christian, he mingled freely with the people of the town and had his share of fun. It seems that during the first years at Round Top he taught only elementary work, such as reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and German. There was a daily period of Bible reading and one of singing.<sup>17</sup>

After the war in 1866 a two-and-a-half-storied house, which was the Neuthard home as well as a dormitory, was built. It is said that Reverend Neuthard frequently had his pupils to partake of some lunch at his home. The fence,

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16. The Texas Monument, June 7, 1854, p. 2.

17. Interview, Mr. August Bauerkaemper.

which still surrounds the church and cemetery, was built of rocks hauled by school boys for punishment.<sup>18</sup>

Between Round Top and Shelby in the vicinity of Nassau plantation was a little German school taught by Mr. George H. Fricke, Sr., who was also a music teacher and choir director. The private school, which Mr. Fricke built himself, was called George H. Fricke, Sr. School. Mr. Fricke was paid by his patrons. He was well-educated and had a degree from a German university. Mr. Fricke, who was born in Hanover, Germany, on September 19, 1821, came to Texas in 1846, served in the Mexican War, returned to Europe, and came back to Texas with his bride. He taught school around 1865 to 1873. He died in October, 1893. Mr. Fred Fricke also taught in the Fricke School for one year.<sup>19</sup>

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18. Rummel, Helen, "Ancient Splendors of Round Top" in The Houston Chronicle, August 10, 1924.

19. Interview, Mr. E. L. Fricke, Round Top. Mr. George H. Fricke was the grandfather and Mr. Fred Fricke was the father of Mr. E. L. Fricke.

### CHAPTER III

#### SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In 1858 and 1859 six acres of land on the headwaters of the Navidad were donated by John W. Herndon, N. W. Faison, and Henry Ebeling for the purpose of building the High Hill School.<sup>1</sup> Professor Paul Stuercke, assisted by Mr. Ernest Goeth, taught the High Hill School during the "War Between the States." Mr. Stuercke had been educated to be a lawyer and was a graduate of a German university. He was an excellent teacher but very strict about the correct punctuation of the English language.<sup>2</sup> He taught reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, history, and algebra. Before and after school hours he taught music. He also taught adults at night.<sup>3</sup>

About 1870 another school was established and was taught by Mr. Heyer. There were students from Houston, Galveston, and Columbus that boarded in High Hill. The building in which Mr. Heyer taught belonged to the county. There was only one month of free school each year.<sup>4</sup> The course of study included double-entry bookkeeping.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Deed Records of Fayette County, Vol. N, p. 140 and Vol. O, p. 118.

2. Interview, Mr. John Wick, Schulenburg, Texas. Mr. Wick attended the Stuercke school in 1866.

3. Interview, Mrs. Theodore Helmcamp, Schulenburg. Mrs. Helmcamp is a daughter of Mr. Stuercke.

4. Interview, Mr. G. A. Baumgarten, Schulenburg.

5. Interview, Mr. H. P. Schaefer, Schulenburg.

In the northwestern part of Fayette County, at Ingram's Prairie, about fourteen miles from La Grange, was located the Winchester Male and Female Academy which opened its doors on August 29, 1859.<sup>6</sup> Two acres of land were bought by the academy the same year.<sup>7</sup> Mr. John M. Ware, A.B., was the principal of the Winchester Male and Female Academy. He was assisted by his wife, Mrs. Ware, who gave instruction "in music on the Piano and Melodion."<sup>8</sup>

The courses were primary English, ten dollars; higher English, including English grammar, arithmetic, geography, history, and exercises in composition, fifteen dollars; and ancient languages, and higher branches of mathematics and Natural Science, twenty dollars.<sup>9</sup> Students were not accepted for less than a term of five months. The board could be obtained for seven to ten dollars a month.<sup>10</sup> In 1861 the tuition was quoted at twenty-five dollars to forty dollars for ten months.<sup>11</sup> At the close of the first session of the Winchester Male and Female Academy a public examination and exhibition was held.<sup>12</sup>

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6. The True Issue, August 27, 1859, p. 2.

7. Deed Records of Fayette County, Vol. P, p. 495.

8. The True Issue, January 13, 1860, p. 2; and July 5, 1860, p. 2.

9. The True Issue, August 27, 1859, p. 2.

10. The True Issue, January 13, 1860, p. 3.

11. The True Issue, July 25, 1861, p. 2.

12. The True Issue, February 3, 1860, p. 2.

A later teacher of the school was Mr. McClellan. The land upon which the school was built was owned by Mr. Gates Thomas' grandfather and another gentleman. After many years of service to the community, the school was closed. Some lady, who had become the owner of the school land, decided to have the building razed. Mr. Gates Thomas helped with this work one summer.<sup>13</sup>

Another of the Fayette County schools was the La Grange Collegiate Institute. The establishment and incorporation of this institution was under the supervision of the Colorado Presbytery. The school lasted from 1850 to 1870.<sup>14</sup> The following report is interesting:

"A flourishing school, under the auspices of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, has been in operation during the last year with good success. Under the supervision of Mr. Montrose, a teacher who has done much for the cause of education in Texas, this institution will continue, no doubt, to enjoy a favorable comparison with the most important institutions of the state."<sup>15</sup>

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13. Interview, Mr. Gates Thomas, San Marcos, Texas.

14. Gammel, H. P. N., The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897, Vol. III, pp. 153-154, Austin: The Gammel Book Company, 1898.

15. Eby, Frederick, Education in Texas, p. 379.

## CHAPTER IV

### RUTERSVILLE COLLEGE

Perhaps the most notable and outstanding early educational effort and achievement in Fayette County was the establishment of the Rutersville College at Rutersville, about six miles east of La Grange. It was a center of moral, religious, and educational influence and was started by the desire of Doctor Martin Ruter to do missionary work in Texas.<sup>1</sup> The college was the most important historical place in Fayette County and was the first school of higher education in Texas.<sup>2</sup> A town with the proper moral surroundings had to be established.<sup>3</sup> Doctor Ruter wanted the school to be denominational, but Congress would not grant a charter for that type of school. The board of trustees wanted Congress to establish a "government chair" in Rutersville and call it a "Professorship of Geology."<sup>4</sup> The act to establish and incorporate the school was approved on February 5, 1840.<sup>5</sup>

When Doctor Ruter died, Robert Alexander and Chauncey Richardson gave the leadership needed to build the school.

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1. Thrall, Homer S., A Brief History of Methodism in Texas, p. 265, Nashville, Tenn.: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1889.

2. Eby, Frederick, Education in Texas, p. 204.

3. Lide, Edwin S., Robert Alexander and The Early Methodist Church in Texas, pp. 42-43, La Grange: La Grange Journal, 1934.

4. Ledlow, William Franklin, History of Protestant Education in Texas, p. 138, Austin: University of Texas, Ph. D. Thesis, 1926.

5. Eby, Frederick, Education in Texas, p. 204.

Four leagues of land were granted to the school by the Republic of Texas.<sup>6</sup> Through the efforts of Reverend Chauncey Richardson, much money and other contributions were received for the college. He gave some choice minerals and shells amounting to six hundred dollars.<sup>7</sup> The first session of the college was to open in January, 1840. The opening date was postponed until February because the buildings were not ready for use. The building for the boys was a two-storied frame structure, fifty-two feet long and twenty-six feet wide. For the female department, the building was a one-story frame structure.<sup>8</sup>

The college year was divided into two terms of twenty-one weeks each. Vacation was for nine weeks in July and August and one week preceding the first Monday in February.<sup>9</sup> Nine departments made up the course of study. These were: the Moral Science and Belles Lettres Department, the Mathematics Department, the Ancient Languages and Literature Department, the Preparatory Department, the Female Department, the Medical Department, and the Law Department. Among the subjects studied were: botany, algebra, trigonometry, chemistry, biology,

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6. Eby, Frederick, op. cit., p. 205.

7. Catalogue of Rutgersville College, 1840, pp. 14-18.

8. The Texas Monument, November 5, 1851, p. 2.

9. Catalogue of Rutgersville College, 1840, p. 13.



mineralogy, and literature.<sup>10</sup> Of course, many other subjects were also studied. These were almost the same as are taught now in high schools and junior colleges.

In each department, the students were arranged into sections according to their different degrees of advancement in the studies of that particular department, without any reference to their standing in the other departments, or to the time they had been members of the college. Any student could take a course in part or in its entirety. No one could receive a degree of Bachelor of Arts unless he passed an examination in the entire classical course without regard to the time he had spent in college.<sup>11</sup>

The tuition for a term in elementary studies was thirteen dollars, in higher branches twenty dollars, and in higher branches including the languages, it was twenty-five dollars. Board in private families was twelve dollars and fifty cents a month. The first faculty of Rutgersville College consisted of a president, Reverend Chauncey Richardson; his wife; and a tutor, Charles W. Thomas. Reverend Richardson remained the president for six years. In 1845 two new teachers were added. The next year, however, only three faculty members were listed. William Hadsey became president in 1846. Mrs. Hadsey and Professor Ulysses Chapman assisted him.<sup>12</sup>

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10. Ibid., 1840, p. 8.

11. Second Annual Rutgersville College Catalogue, V. 2, p. 10.

12. Walling, Johanna, Early Education in Fayette County, Austin: University of Texas, Masters Thesis, 1941.

Examinations were held at the end of each term. They were public and embraced a wide range of studies. The students, on these occasions, gave dialogues and original addresses.<sup>13</sup> The topics that were discussed at some of the programs show that the people were interested in problems of the Republic of Texas.<sup>14</sup> "The question debated by students of Rutgersville College, Rutgersville, Fayette County, was: 'Resolved, That it is the policy of Texas to enter into a treaty of alliance with Great Britain rather than be annexed to the United States.'"<sup>15</sup>

Daily bills of merit and demerit were kept of each student. An exhibit of these records were furnished at the close of each term.<sup>16</sup>

At about this time a Methodist from Rutgersville, by the name of Applewhite, was charged with swindling and committing an immoral act to Rutgersville College. Many students did not return to college and from 1850-1856, the patronage was small. About this time Captain W. J. Russel and some other men thought it would be better if the church had no connection with the school.<sup>17</sup> The Legislature was asked to consolidate Rutgersville

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13. Rutgersville College Catalogue, 1840, p. 12.

14. Eby, Frederick, Education in Texas, p. 196.

15. "Some Ancient History" from La Grange Intelligencer, August 30, 1844.

16. Walling, op. cit., p. 39.

17. Phelan, Macum, A History of Early Methodism in Texas, 1817-1866, Nashville, Tenn. Cokesbury pr. Company, 1924 Tables Vol. I, p. 331.

College with a military school in Galveston.<sup>18</sup> On August 6, 1856 the Legislature passed the act which provided for the consolidation of Rutgersville College, the Texas Military Institute and the Texas Monumental Committee. It was called the Texas Monumental and Military Institute. The college was free of any denominational control. It was dedicated to serve as a memorial for Texas soldiers and offer educational advantages to the youth of Texas.<sup>19</sup>

The Texas Monumental and Military Institute opened its first session in October, 1856 under the superintendency of Colonel Caleb G. Forshey. Under him the school had prospects of becoming successful until the outbreak of the Civil War. Cadets of this school shouldered guns in 1861 and the institute never reopened. An effort was made to retain the female school. Miss Ellen Porter Phelps, a northern teacher, taught a small group of girls during the war between the States.<sup>20</sup> Rutgersville College still lives in the memory of many Texans.

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18. Phelan, op. cit., pp. 400-401.

19. The True Issue, September 12, 1856, p. 2; Ledlow, op. cit., p. 141.

20. The True Issue, September 18, 1857, p. 2.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

Early schools of Fayette County were unique in respect to their very early establishment by those pioneering efforts of intellectually inclined individuals. Their achievement was certainly notable. It is significant to note that in many of these schools the church played a prominent part. Interesting is the fact that schools were especially numerous in La Grange, county seat of Fayette County. No less than eight schools were listed for that city from 1839 to 1870.

Usually the people, who were instrumental in the establishment of the schools, were, in no small way, outstanding characters. Some were noted educators, ministers, and lawyers, who possessed college degrees even then. The efforts of these remarkable personalities were a blessing and exerted a profound influence upon the lives of thousands of people. The life stories of such great educators are often interesting both for inspiration and for information. They should remind one of:

"The lives of great men reached and kept  
Were not attained by sudden flight;  
But they while their companions slept,  
Were toiling upward in the night."<sup>1</sup>

If this thesis furnishes information or serves any other valuable purpose, the writer feels that his efforts are well rewarded.

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