

**A HISTORY OF RICHARD CARTER,
COLLEGE STATION'S EARLIEST SETTLER**

by

Shawn Bonath Carlson

May 2, 1983
Archaeological Research Laboratory
Texas A & M University
College Station, Texas

A HISTORY OF RICHARD CARTER, COLLEGE STATION'S EARLIEST SETTLER

Richard Carter (1789-1863), son of Joseph Carter and Nancy Menefee of Virginia¹, may have been a constituent of the “Alabama Settlement”² which migrated from Virginia to Tennessee, Alabama, and finally East Texas during the latter part of the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th century. Carter, and his wife, Elizabeth, were married in 1811 in Knoxville, Tennessee³ and later moved to Morgan County, Alabama⁴. On 30 April 1831, Richard Carter received a grant for one league and one labor of land within the Stephen F. Austin colony in Brazos County⁵.

The first reference to Carter’s presence in Texas comes from an 1878 interview with his daughter, Evaline Burton. According to the author, Burton claimed “that from the arrival of their family in 1831, until the following July, she never saw a white woman, or had any association with women other than those of her own family, and squaws, and that during this time their family lived exclusively on wild meats and honey, with butter and cheese, etc., without any bread, except that made out of turkey breasts”⁶. Another early Brazos County settler, Harvey Mitchell, described the Carter Creek bottom as, “an unbroken canebrake, infested with bear, panthers, wild cats, and other enemies of hogs and cattle, as well as of men...”⁷. In a separate account, Mitchell says, “This family remained at this home completely isolated from the world and all social intercourse except with friendly Indians till 1835, their nearest and only white neighbors being the

¹ Letter from Duane Carter, descendant of Richard Carter, to Eleanor Nance, College Station, citing information from family Bible in his possession at Amherst, Texas, October 1982.

² Freeman, Martha Doty and William B. Fawcett, Jr. *The Antebellum Period in the Stephen F. Austin Colony: Historical and Archeological Research in the Palmetto Bend Reservoir Area, Jackson County, Texas*. Texas Archeological Survey, *Research Report No. 70*, University of Texas at Austin, Palmetto Bend Reservoir Series, Vol. 5, 1980.

³ Marriage date of Richard and Elizabeth Carter, from Gene Carter, descendant of Richard Carter, Germantown, Tennessee, via Tony Desern, descendant of Mary Ann Carter Reed, College Station.

⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1830, Population Schedules of the Fifth Census of the United States (White and Free Colored Population). National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy No. M-19, Roll 4, p. 213, no. 13, Alabama, Genealogical Room, Texas State Library, Austin.

⁵ Texas (Republic of) Government Land Office. *An Abstract of the Original Titles of Record in the General Land Office*. National Banner Office, Niles and Co., Printers, Houston, 1838. Reproduced by the Pemberton Press, Austin, 1964.

⁶ Efron, Kate. Historical Sketch of Brazos County, Texas. In *American Sketchbook* 4(4):237-251, 1878.

⁷ Mitchell, Colonel Harvey. Colonel Harvey Mitchell’s First, Last, and Only Bear Hunt. Photocopy, Harvey Mitchell Biographical File, Texas A & M University Archives, College Station.

Millicans and Woottons.... These were the only white people that had settled in this territory previous to the 'Runaway Scrape' in 1836..."⁸

Carter apparently moved, sometime after 1835, to a place called "Tinninville," located north of the San Antonio Road at the Navasota River in Robertson County⁹. He is listed in the first tax rolls of Robertson County (1838) as paying taxes on 1476 acres¹⁰, originally granted to Jeremiah Tinnan in 1835¹¹. According to Mitchell, he boarded with the Carter's at Tinninville during 1839 and 1840¹². He later visited their home, again on Carter Creek in Brazos County, during Christmas of 1841. At that time, the Carter's were living in a one-room log cabin and stockraising was widespread locally.

Carter's proximity to Boonville, which was established as the county seat in 1841, influenced his involvement in county affairs. Richard Carter, along with John H. Jones and Hiram Hanover served as the first Board of Commissioners in 1841, and were appointed to survey the town of Boonville and auction off the lots¹³. Carter's son, Wiley, served at the first meeting of the grand jury in Boonville¹⁴. In 1848, Carter served again as a commissioner, while his son-in-law, Wilson Reed, served in 1852 and 1866 as a commissioner¹⁵. His other son-in-law, Samuel Burton, served as county treasurer in 1850¹⁶.

In 1842, Carter began dividing up his original grant of land among his family¹⁷. During the month of October 1842, Carter deeded 500 acres of his original grant to his son Wiley, 120 acres to Wilson Reed, 976 acres to

⁸ Mitchell, Colonel Harvey. Untitled Manuscript. Photocopy, Harvey Mitchell Biographical File, Texas A & M University Archives, College Station.

⁹ Mitchell, Colonel Harvey. See no. 7.

¹⁰ Robertson County Tax Rolls, 1838-1840. Microtext Department, Sterling Evans Library, Texas A & M University, College Station.

¹¹ Texas Government Land Office. *Abstract of All Original Texas Land Titles Comprising Grants and Locations to August 31, 1941*. Volume 3, p. 851, Austin, 1941.

¹² Mitchell, Colonel Harvey. See no. 7.

¹³ Nance, Joseph Milton. *The Early History of Bryan and the Surrounding Area*. Hood's Brigade-Bryan Centennial Committee, Bryan, 1962.

¹⁴ Mitchell, Colonel Harvey. "Colorful History of County and Five Courthouses." Taken from the Manuscript by Col. H. Mitchell, n.d. In *Texas Records: Brazos River Valley (1787-1952), Vol. II*, compiled by Mrs. Richard Ervin Callender, La Villita Chapter, D.A.R. Genealogical Room, Texas State Library, Austin.

¹⁵ Marshall, Elmer Grady. *The History of Brazos County, Texas*. Unpublished Master's thesis, Texas A & M University, Sterling Evans Library, College Station, 1937:226.

¹⁶ Marshall, Elmer Grady, 1937:224.

¹⁷ Brazos County Deed Records, Book B., pp. 28, 33, 36, 43. Brazos County Courthouse, Bryan.

Samuel L. Burton, and a gift of 300 acres to his daughter, Mary Ann Reed (wife of Wilson). By the end of the Texas Republic Period, Richard Carter had succeeded in increasing the value of his real and personal property from \$1300 to \$5800. His gains were apparently made through stockraising and slave ownership¹⁸.

During the period of early statehood and pre-Civil War growth, Carter consistently added to his wealth through the accumulation of cattle, horses, and slaves¹⁹. He was listed as a farmer in the 1850 U.S. Census and owned 350 cattle, 5 horses, and 5 slaves. However, only three other Brazos County residents owned more cattle than Carter²⁰.

By 1860, Carter had a herd of 1000 cattle and was among the top cotton and corn producers in the county²¹. Carter maintained his herd with a force of 22 slaves and 31 horses, making him one of the wealthiest landowners and slave owners in the county²².

From 1846-1860, Carter's estate increased in value from \$5800 to \$30,000²³. This was in part due to an increase in the value of land and cattle. Also, increased production of corn and cotton was possible through an expanded number of improved acres²⁴. However, the most significant factor accounting for his prosperity over the years was the value of slaves. *Half* of his taxable property was based upon slave ownership—each slave averaging \$800 in 1860.

Richard Carter died in 1863 at the age of 74²⁵. Apparently Carter had no inclination that emancipation would be proclaimed within the lifetime of

¹⁸ Robertson County Tax Rolls, 1838-1840; Brazos County Tax Rolls 1842-1845; Microtext Department, Sterling Evans Library, Texas A & M University, College Station.

¹⁹ Brazos County Tax Rolls, 1846-1861. Microtext Department, Sterling Evans Library, Texas A & M University, College Station.

²⁰ Brazos County Tax Rolls, 1850; U.S. Census, Agricultural Schedule, 1850; Microtext Department, Sterling Evans Library, Texas A & M University, College Station.

²¹ U.S. Census, Agricultural Schedule, 1860. Microtext Department, Sterling Evans Library, Texas A & M University, College Station.

²² Brazos County Tax Rolls, 1860, Microtext Department, Sterling Evans Library, Texas A & M University, College Station.

²³ Brazos County Tax Rolls, 1846-1860. Microtext Department, Sterling Evans Library, Texas A & M University, College Station.

²⁴ U.S. Census, Agricultural Schedule, 1860. Microtext Department, Sterling Evans Library, Texas A & M University, College Station.

²⁵ Brazos County Probate Records, Application for Probate, Vol. E. p. 380. Brazos County Courthouse, Bryan.

his family. Upon the death of his wife Elizabeth, who died in 1876²⁶, he requested that his property, including his two slave families, be divided among his children and grandchildren.²⁷

Through the war years, Carter's estate climbed to an unprecedented \$44,000²⁸. But after the 1865 taxes were assessed, the value of the Carter family estate had plummeted to \$9800—which still left them within the upper economic bracket of Brazos County. In spite of the loss of three-fourths of their accumulated wealth, Elizabeth Carter was the second largest cattle owner in the county in 1865, and, economically, remained within the top 2% of the county.

During the years of reconstruction following the war, Elizabeth Carter's finances were relatively grim compared to the pre-war years²⁹. From 1865 until her death in 1876, her property dwindled in value until it reached a low of \$3400 right before her death.

The estate left by Elizabeth Carter in 1877 had little comparison to the estate left by Richard Carter in 1863³⁰. The final estate consisted of 2342 acres in the Richard Carter Headright in Brazos County, plus 676 acres in McLennan County, and \$4100. Carter's granddaughter, Geraldine Kelly (nee Reed), inherited the tract of land where the former Carter homesite is located. It remained in the family until 1903 when it was sold by Carter's daughter, Evaline Burton, to H.P. Dansby³¹. It is believed that the land was used only for grazing livestock after that time.

²⁶ Brazos County Civil Minutes, Report of Commissioners and Decree Approving Same, Vol. F, p. 380. Brazos County Courthouse, Bryan.

²⁷ Brazos County Probate Records, Will of Richard Carter, Vol. E, p. 313. Brazos County Courthouse, Bryan.

²⁸ Brazos County Tax Rolls, 1861-1865. Microtext Department, Sterling Evans Library, Texas A & M University, College Station.

²⁹ Brazos County Tax Rolls, 1866-1877. Microtext Department, Sterling Evans Library, Texas A & M University, College Station.

³⁰ Brazos County Probate Records, Will of Richard Carter, Vol. E, p. 313. Brazos County Courthouse, Bryan.

³¹ Brazos County Deed Records, E. Burton to H.P. Dansby, Vol. 28, pp. 83-84. Brazos County Courthouse, Bryan.

CRITERIA FOR HISTORICAL MARKER

The homesite of Richard Carter is being submitted for commemoration under three marker categories: archeological site, cemetery, and historic person.

Archeological Site: The Richard Carter Site has been recorded with the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory as 41BZ74 and represents a continuous historic occupation from ca. 1831-1877. Archeological excavations suggest that there was no prior occupation at this site and little evidence of occupation after 1900. Though the site has been disturbed to some extent by dirt bikes and 4-wheel drives, there seems to be no intrusive material remains. The homesite is located on a hillcrest adjacent to a massive stone lined well, reportedly 90 feet in depth. The graves of Richard Carter and his wife Elizabeth are a short distance downslope from the homesite and within the forest's edge.

The site is located in College Station approximately one-half mile north of Hwy 30 and approximately 1 mile west of the west frontage road paralleling Hwy 6 Bypass (UTM Zone 14, Easting 758000, Northing 3392040). The site is currently owned by Brazosland Realty of College Station.

The Richard Carter Site is significant locally because it represents the homesite of College Station's earliest settler. The Richard Carter Headright today encompasses most of the city. It is also significant on a county level because it reflects the lifestyle of one of Brazos County's wealthiest men during the nineteenth century. Carter was consistently among the largest property owners throughout his life in Brazos County. And the site is of state significance because its occupation spans the periods of Texas under Mexican rule, Texas as a republic, Texas statehood, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. Few other single component sites provide archeological data spanning these major political periods in Texas' history.

Archeological and historical investigations were carried out by Texas A & M University in the late summer and fall of 1982. The cultural remains recovered from those investigations have been curated and stored at the Archeological Research Laboratory, Texas A & M University, College Station.

Cemetery: The Carter family cemetery is located 150 meters north of the homesite. To date, archeological excavations have only located two iron footings for the cemetery fence. Vandalism in the 1960s resulted in both the fence and headstones being removed and destroyed. The graves of Richard (d. 1863) and Elizabeth (d. 1876) Carter reportedly were within the fenced enclosure with slave graves outside the fence. The number of slave graves is unknown at this time.

The cemetery is also owned by Brazosland Realty. The cemetery is not in current use, is not maintained, and is not observable except through excavation.

Historic Person: Richard Carter (1789-1863) was born in Virginia and died in Brazos County, Texas. While Carter's contributions to society may not be significant on a national or state level, his achievements are relative to the Texas frontier he penetrated in 1831 and may be representative of the hundreds of pioneers who flocked to Texas with the Stephen F. Austin Colony during those early years of settlement.

Richard Carter (1789-1863, b. Franklin County, Virginia) was the son of Joseph Carter and Nancy Menefee of Virginia. In 1811, he and his wife, Elizabeth (1788-1876, b. Shenandoah County, Virginia) were married in Knoxville, Tennessee. Elizabeth bore him four children: Wiley (1813-1850), Evaline (1816-?), Mary Ann (1817-1857), and Elizabeth (birth and death dates unknown). In 1820, the Carters moved to Decatur, Alabama.

Carter's son, Wiley, married Harriet Reed (1820-?), sister of Wilson Reed, and their children, all born in Texas, were: William J. (b. 1838), Samuel Houston (b. 1840), John C. (b. 1843), Jesse Frank (b. 1847), and Wiley S. (b. 1849).

Carter's daughter, Evaline, married Samuel Burton (b. 1810, Kentucky), and their children were: William (b. 1837, Mississippi), Elizabeth (b. 1839, Texas), Mary (b. 1841, Texas), and Wiley (b. 1842, Texas).

Carter's daughter, Mary Ann, married Wilson Reed (b. 1811, Tennessee) and their children, all born in Texas, were: John (b. 1837), Geraldine (b. 1838), Richard (b. 1841), Wiley (b. 1843), William (b. 1845), and Elizabeth (b. 1849).

Carter's last daughter, Elizabeth, apparently married a Mormon and moved to Salt Lake City, Utah. No information could be found about her in any of the Texas records.

Two of Carter's children, Wiley and Mary Ann, preceded him in death. His daughter, Evaline, eventually moved to McLennan County with her family. And, of course, his daughter, Elizabeth, had moved to Utah. The wealth and position of the Carter family was carried on through the Wilson Reed family. Wilson Reed had six children by Mary Ann Carter, and several more children by his second wife. Descendants of the Reed family currently live in Brazos County and College Station.

Richard Carter served in the War of 1812 as a private in the Militia Infantry of East Tennessee Volunteers³². His son, Wiley, has a long history of military service. He received a bounty warrant for 320 acres in Freestone County as a result of his service in the Texas War of Independence from 29 April to 27 July 1836³³. Wiley Carter also served with the Texas Rangers as a private under Captain J.D. Matthew from 8 March to 8 June 1839³⁴. Wiley Carter and Wilson Reed were both reported serving under Captain Benjamin Bryant in January 1839 when they pursued the Indians after the January 1 massacre at Morgan's Point, six miles above present-day Marlin in Falls County³⁵.

Four of Wiley Carter's sons served in the Civil War. Jesse Frank Carter enlisted as a private with the 14th Brigade of the Confederate Army at Hunt City on 6 July 1861 under Captain Jackson Wilson³⁶. Samuel Houston Carter enlisted on 24 March in Belton and served as a 3rd corporal with the 7th Brigade, Allen's Regiment, under Captain H.M. Bouldin and was discharged 30 June 1862. William J. Carter enlisted at Belton on 15 January 1862 under Captain Milton W. Damron and served with Company D of the 18th Texas Cavalry, Darnell's Regiment. He was discharged twelve months later as a corporal. And Wiley H. Carter enlisted 8 September 1861 at

³² Information prepared by Eleanor Hanover Nance, College Station, on 10-08-80.

³³ Texas Government Land Office. See no. 11, p. 406.

³⁴ Texas Ranger Service Records, Section 1 – Rangers, 1830-1846, Reel 8. Texas State Library, Archives, Austin.

³⁵ Martin, Mrs. John T. and Mrs. Louis C. Hill, compilers. *Milam County, Texas Records, Vol. 1*. Waco, Texas, 1965, p. 3.

³⁶ Confederate Military Service Records, Reel 8; Index to Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers who served in Organizations from the State of Texas, Roll 6, Microcopy No. 227, Texas State Library, Archives, Austin.

Dallas for 11 months, 28 days. His commanding officer was Captain Jack Wharton and he served as a private with Company E, 6th Regiment, Texas Cavalry (Stone's Regiment, 2nd Texas Cavalry).

As mentioned earlier, Richard Carter was buried in a family cemetery adjacent to the homesite in College Station. Though headstones formerly marked the gravesite, vandals have since destroyed those markers. The grave of Carter has not yet been identified archeologically, but the footings for the iron fence which once enclosed the graves of Carter and his wife have been found.