

## WILLIAM B. TRAVIS LEAGUE

### CONTEXT

Deep in the heart of Hays County lies the William B. Travis League. Renowned for the iconic beauty of Onion Creek which flows through it, for millennia it was the sole preserve of indigenous peoples. <sup>1</sup> Excavations within a few miles of the league indicate a strong Native American presence, dating back to 6000 BC. To the west, near Wimberley, the Timmeron Site revealed cultivation of the land as early as 1200 BC, and recent archeological evidence shows Native Americans congregated in large numbers near the Blanco River. To the east, near Buda, the Barton, Mustang Branch, and Gregg Ranch's Greenhaw sites show native peoples camped, baking plants and processing antelope, bison, and deer from the seventh to 16th centuries AD. <sup>2</sup> In more recent times, according to late Texas Chief Justice Roy Archer, "*the sharp bend or oxbow in Onion Creek where Highway 150 now crosses the stream twice*" had long been a camping ground for native peoples. He was told that, in the spring of 1840, a large band of Comanche held a meeting there, "*occasioned by the 'Council House Fight' in San Antonio.*" <sup>3</sup>

Onion Creek meanders eastwards until its confluence with the Colorado River. At this spot, on April 16, 1709, a small Spanish expedition, headed by Fray Isidro de Espinosa, an inveterate diarist, camped for the night. It was apparently not a pleasant stay, reflected in the name Fray Isidro chose for the stream, Arroyo de las Garrapatas (Stream of Ticks)! On his return in 1716 with Captain Domingo Ramón, the priest records that he "*met his old friends again*" but this time they were "*somewhat more merciful.*" <sup>4</sup> Within 20 years, a more savory name, Onion Creek, had been assigned, from the profusion of wild onions on its banks.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to page after Bibliography for figures showing original William B. Travis Survey #15 and current appraisal district map.

<sup>2</sup> "Archaic and Late Prehistoric Human Ecology in the Middle Onion Creek Valley, Hays County, Texas"

<sup>3</sup> Justice Archer owned property near Driftwood and also guaranteed a lien for R.C. Roberts in the William B. Travis League.

<sup>4</sup> "The Quarterly of Texas State Historical Association" Vol XV No 1 Page 38 July 1911 — quoting Fray Isidro de Espinosa's diary.

By this time, Spain had ceded rights to Nuevo Espana, making Coahuila y Tejas part of the new country of Mexico. The Empresario System was introduced to persuade settlement in this bufferzone against the United States of America with its belief in Manifest Destiny. One who took advantage of this was Ben Rush Milam in 1826. He contracted with the Mexican government to settle 300 families between the Guadalupe and Colorado rivers north of the Camino Real. Of 53 land titles issued in 1835, one went to a hot-headed, red-haired, 26-year-old lawyer. His name was William Barret “Buck” Travis. He had arrived in the Mexican state of Tejas in 1831, having abandoned his wife, Rosanna, their son, Charles Edward, and yet unborn daughter, Susan Isabella. Travis set up a law practice in Anahauc.

On April 9, 1835, William Barret Travis signed for and promised to put under cultivation his league of land from empresario Ben Milam’s grant. The following day, Travis took the required oath to Mexico and became the owner of his one and only headright land grant of one league of land (4,428 acres).<sup>5</sup>

## OVERVIEW

William B. Travis acquired the land because it was available and affordable, to settle or with an eye to possible speculation on a future sale once settlers reached that far west. Travis was a leader in the opposition to Mexican control of the state of Tejas. With a band of 25 volunteers, he attacked the Mexican garrison in Anahauc in 1832. This action would eventually lead to his death as commander at the Alamo.

Between acquiring his land and his death at the Alamo, Travis had no time to think of settling his land. That was left to his two young children, Charles Edward (1829-1860) and Susan Isabella (1831-1868). Between 1853 and 1855, Charles Travis represented Caldwell and Hays

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<sup>5</sup> Texas General Land Office - SC 000039:24 File # 001539. The Travis heirs also received a Milam bounty grant of 640 acres in Burnet County.

Counties in the Texas Legislature in Austin, once the small settlement of Waterloo. Second president of the Republic of Texas, Mirabeau Lamar, had visited Waterloo on a bison hunt and realized its potential for his plans of western expansion. He proposed it as a suitable permanent site for the seat of government. “The Report to the Commissioners Named to Select a Permanent Capital for the Republic of Texas, April 13, 1839” noted the abundance of lumber along the limpid streams in the Edwards Plateau. *“At the distance of eighteen miles west by South from the site, on Onion Creek, a stream affording fine water found at intervals up the River for a distance of forty miles, and together with immense quantities of fine cedar might readily be floated down the stream,....”*<sup>6</sup> As the new capital grew exponentially, the need for lumber accelerated. Charles Travis realized the economic potential of his magnificent cypress trees for making shingles. He decided it was time to split the league between himself and his sister. The boundary line ran from the northeast corner in a southwesterly direction to *“a ford on Onion Creek at the mouth of a small creek which comes in below the mouth of the creek known as Flat Creek.”* It then went in a direct line to the southwest corner. This was *“because the Cypress Timber was deemed the most valuable part of the said League of Land, the crossing above named on the Creek was thought to divide the said timber nearly equally.”*<sup>7</sup> Charles Travis’s share, known as the East or Lower Half, extended to 2,208 acres, and sister Susan J. (Travis) Grissett’s 2,220-acre section was the West or Upper Half. On April 11, 1853, Charles bought his sister’s Upper Half for \$2,500.<sup>8</sup>

On February 7, 1854, Charles sold his Lower Half to an Englishman, John Charles Johnson (1821-1864).<sup>9</sup> The selling price was 200,000 cypress shingles to be delivered to Charles in Austin. *“He is to deliver to said Travis in the City of Austin, two hundred thousand Cypress*

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<sup>6</sup> “History of Travis County and Austin 1839-1899” by Mary Starr Barklay (member of Travis County Historical Commission) 1963 and “Historical Ecology of the Texas Hill Country” by Lisa O’Donnell, Senior Biologist City of Austin January 29, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Hays County Records — OPR Book B/Page 366 — description when Susan’s “Upper Half” sold to M. C. Hamilton

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. OPR L / 328

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. OPR B / 225

*Shingles of the thickness of one half inch, and otherwise good merchantable shingles: the first twelve thousand five hundred (12, 500) to be delivered as above in March 1854, and the balance to be delivered as above at the rate of twelve thousand five hundred per month until the contract is completed and the 200, 000 shingles are delivered.”* Charles would then produce a “*good and sufficient warrantee deed.*”

On February 7, 1855, John Johnson sold some of his land to his brothers-in-law — 880 acres to John M. Butler and 347 acres to Mathias Speed<sup>10</sup>. Both men were required to deliver 66,666 shingles to Austin by July 1, 1855.<sup>11</sup> Each had already delivered 54,166. This would fulfill Johnson’s obligation to Charles Travis, and he would receive his warranty deed. However there was a hitch. In January 1855, Charles was sued by Austin merchant, Francis T. Duffau, for debt of \$65.22. When he did not pay up, on March 6, 1855, his Upper Half of the William B. Travis League was seized and transferred it to Duffau. On April 21, 1855, Travis drew a bill of exchange on the account of Morgan C. Hamilton and had his title returned to him.<sup>12</sup> This may have been why he was slow to provide John Johnson with his title, so John sued. The jury ruled in his favor on February 3, 1857, entitling him and his brothers-in-law to their land.<sup>13</sup>

On August 14, 1854, Charles had sold his sister’s Upper Half for \$2,214, to the above-mentioned Morgan C. Hamilton.<sup>14</sup> Hamilton deeded his land on December 12, 1854, to his sister, Julia (1813-1898), and her husband, Methodist minister, William Anderson Smith (1809-1867).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> John Butler was the son of Reece and Lucy (Meeks) Butler. His sister Sarah was married to John C. Johnson and sister Ann to Mathias Speed. Two of his mother’s sisters, Nancy and Elizabeth Meeks married brothers Daniel and John Mayes and also settled in the area, but not in the Travis league.

<sup>11</sup> Hays County Records — OPR C/ 108

<sup>12</sup> Ibid OPR C/82 & OPR C/83. The matter did not end there as Hamilton had insufficient funds, so Duffau filed suit again in August. Citation posted in Texas State Times Vol II No 38, Aug 25, 1855. Court case detailed in “Reports of Cases Argued and Decided in the Supreme Court of Texas.” Vol 20 1858 by O.C. & R.K. Hartley.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. OPR D/137

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. OPR B/366. Morgan Calvin Hamilton, a merchant and politician, served in the Republic of Texas and two terms in the 1870s as Republican senator from the state of Texas in the US Senate. His brother was Texas governor and Civil War Union general, Andrew Jackson Hamilton.

<sup>15</sup> Hays County Records. OPR C /11

The deed specified that the land include “*the most easterly angle of the said Onion Creek with the Cypress Timber.*” Their Hays County tax records indicate that the Smiths owned four slaves. The 1860 census has the Smiths living in Webberville, Travis County, where William Anderson Smith was listed as a Methodist minister.<sup>16</sup> They had sold 277 acres on November 29, 1855, except for the cypress trees on the creek, to Jesse G. Danner (1818-1885) who was a blacksmith and a stockman. The deed has the first reference to the Hamilton crossing. Jesse Danner sold his 277 acres on June 4, 1860, to Elijah B. and Caroline M. (Johnson) Rawls and Henry and Jane G. Johnson.<sup>17</sup> The Danners moved further east, buying land on Plum Creek.<sup>18</sup> Julia Smith’s husband died in 1867. She sold the rest of her land to Chester Parsons Drake on June 22, 1878.<sup>19</sup>

As the 1860s dawned, dark clouds of war were gathering. Of the landowners living in Travis league in 1860, the only one listed as having slaves in Hays County that particular year was Elijah Rawls.<sup>20</sup> Elijah’s 15-year-old son, Richard, joined the Confederate Army, in Colonel Nicholas Darnell’s Regiment of Texas Cavalry, but was discharged six months later because he was underage.<sup>21</sup> In 1864, Richard and his father joined the Texas State Troops, under Colonel John Salmon “RIP” Ford, serving with Captain Wiley H. D. Carrington’s Company C., 4th Battalion Cavalry.<sup>22</sup> Richard and Elijah were in good company as their neighbors, Mathias Speed and John Johnson, were also part of Carrington’s Company. One of the last actions that Corporal Johnson took part in was recorded by one of his fellow soldiers after the Battle of San Martin and Palmetto

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<sup>16</sup> Rev. Smith had been transferred in 1850 from Alabama to the Texas Methodist Conference. When the Texas Institute for the Blind was founded in Austin, the Rev. Smith was appointed superintendent, Julia was matron, and daughters, Mary and Salome, were teachers.

<sup>17</sup> Hays County Records. OPR D/163. The men were brothers-in-law. Henry Johnson was not related to John C. Johnson.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. OPR C / 238 By 1880, Jesse and Nancy Danner had moved to the Territory of New Mexico with son George, and daughter Virginia and her husband Rufus Dunnahoo. They became ranchers. Rufus Dunnahoo was Roswell’s first blacksmith.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. OPR L/ 329 . Drake, a flour merchant, and his brother formed Drake Brothers Lumber Company in Austin which became Calcasieu Lumber.

<sup>20</sup> Hays County Slave Schedule 1860.

<sup>21</sup> Young Richard was recruited on Christmas Day 1861, by W. H. Perry (brother of famous Texas Ranger, Cicero Perry) who lived closer to Driftwood. Also recruited by Perry that day was Dripping Spring’s pioneer doctor, Joseph M. Pound.

<sup>22</sup> Captain Carrington was a lawyer and a minister. According to the 1870 census, he was the now-widowed Julia Smith’s and her son Robert’s next-door neighbor in Austin.

Ranch in a newspaper report. *“A laughable incident occurred in pursuit of the retreating yankees.”* The men had formed up on a sand hill when one of their number *“dashed forward at full speed insisting upon being allowed to charge them alone. It was with considerable difficulty that Lt. Smith and Corporal Johnson could induce him to abandon his purpose.”*<sup>23</sup> Perhaps Corporal Johnson should have heeded his own advice. Sadly he was killed on November 21, 1864.<sup>24</sup> His widow, Sarah, received letters of condolence from Captain Carrington, Lt. Goforth, and Pvt. W. D. Robinson., describing his demise — *“...your husband ascended to the top of a little sand hill to take a good survey of the yankee camps. He had just raised his head as a minnie ball struck him in the forehead and passed entirely through his head, he did not draw a breath afterward, he was dead. We have buried him in the cemetery at Brownsville.”*<sup>25</sup> John Butler also served in the Texas State Troops, but in Davis’ Mounted Volunteers.

With the Civil War over, in 1869, Elijah Rawls and Henry Johnson decided to sell their 277-acre holding. Land speculation was rife, there were three owners before Thomas F. Voight bought it in 1874.<sup>26</sup> After four years, Voight sold 184.5 acres to W.W McGonagill.<sup>27</sup> McGonagill’s son-in-law, John Thompson Jacks, purchased the land on October 26, 1878.<sup>28</sup>

During the Civil War, Tennessee-born John Jacks (1837-1882) was in Lavaca County where he enlisted in Cavalry Company, Texas State Troops, but in 1864 was transferred to the Division Engineer Corps. The following year he married Leah Abigail McGonagill. When they moved into their home on a high bluff overlooking Onion Creek, John put his engineering skills to use. He rigged a steel cable to a fence so that it led 200’ down to the creek, allowing his teenage

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<sup>23</sup> The Weekly State Gazette Wednesday October 19 1864 by a participant

<sup>24</sup> Rip Ford’s Texas Page 386

<sup>25</sup> See [FindaGrave.com](http://FindaGrave.com) entry for Butler Cemetery under John Charles “Jack” Johnson for transcripts of the letters. He now lies in a mass grave at Pineville Cemetery, Louisiana - moved 1909.

<sup>26</sup> Voight was the son-in-law of John Lee Wallace, pioneer settler in Dripping Springs.

<sup>27</sup> Hays County records OPR L /43

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. OPR L / 463

daughters to draw water from the creek without leaving the yard. The 1880 agricultural census shows he wasted no time in working his new land. He had three acres of sorghum that produced 270 gallons of molasses and three acres of cotton that produced a bale, but his 14 acres of corn produced only 40 bushels and five acres of wheat only four bushels. John kept enough cows and poultry to sustain his family, but had 25 swine, nine horses and two working oxen. However he was not to enjoy his land for long. On April 29, 1882, he fell 100' off the bluff. Family lore relates a more sinister tale, that he was shot by a relative of someone he arrested for stealing cattle when he was a constable.

The year before John Jacks died, an event occurred that could have changed the face of the William B. Travis League forever. The current courthouse in San Marcos was deemed unsafe and had to be replaced. That it was situated in the very south had long been a bone of contention for those in the northern part of Hays County. Several vacant strips of public land had recently been found between surveys on the W. B. Travis league.<sup>29</sup> Here was an opportunity to raise the subject of moving the county seat to a more central location.<sup>30</sup>

On November 26, 1881, 205 freeholders asked the County Judge “*to respectfully petition your honorable court to order an election for establishing of the county site of Hays county on the W. B. Travis survey on Flat Creek, about one half mile above what is known as Speed’s Crossing on Onion Creek, situated on the main road from Dripping Springs, Kyle and San Marcos, which is within five miles of the center of said county of Hays. To be known as Hays.*” The signatories included John Jacks, William W. McGonagill, John Butler, Chester Drake, Mathias Speed, and Thomas Voight. County Judge Edward Kone called an election to be held on December 31, 1881. The people of San Marcos made sure they voted, resulting in an overwhelming majority favoring

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<sup>29</sup> This stemmed from the 1862 Homestead Act which led to resurveys between 1874 and 1878.

<sup>30</sup> This was a second attempt. The first, known as Cannonville, situated a few miles south of Dripping Springs on RM 150, had been thwarted in 1860.

the retention of San Marcos as the county seat.<sup>31</sup> A year later, a hard-drinking flamboyant preacher turned cattleman and land speculator, Hezekiah Williams, bought the league's Upper Half from Chester and Caroline Drake.<sup>32</sup> He also bought land south of the William B. Travis League where he attempted to move the county seat when another opportunity arose in 1908 when the courthouse burned.<sup>33</sup> Once again, the attempt failed.

The 1880s brought an influx of settlers into the Onion Creek area, many from the South in the aftermath of the Civil War. They introduced cotton which became the main source of income for a generation until it succumbed to exhausted soils and the boll weevil. More schools were required. In 1881, Bluff Springs School was established near Speed's Crossing. Mathias Speed was one of three trustees.<sup>34</sup> An old cabin with a stone chimney was used, but the boys tore off pieces of siding to stoke the fire, necessitating the building of a new one by the end of the first year. Until 1893, the teacher was Harry Corbett, an Englishman, born in Lahore, India, and graduate of Oxford University who came to seek his fortune in America in 1867.<sup>35</sup> The school was the site of social gatherings, and we learn that Christmas 1886 merited mention in the newspaper. *"The Christmas tree at Bluff Springs was a grand success. Prof. H W Corbette (sic) delivered an address which was admired by all present. He told in a beautiful and pathetic style of the life and sufferings of Him who was born on Christmas day."*<sup>36</sup> In 1888, Mathias Speed sold the acre of

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<sup>31</sup> San Marcos Free Press (SMFP) Vol. XI No. 2, Thurs 1 Dec 1881

<sup>32</sup> Hays County Records. OPR Q / 299 and OPR W / 415 . Hezekiah gradually sold off his William B. Travis League land. Rev. John A. Garison, well-known circuit-riding Methodist preacher, bought 238 acres to the east of the Driftwood/Kyle road against the north line of the league in 1891- OPR27/202

<sup>33</sup> Hezekiah's wife, Lizzie, was the daughter of Prof. Thomas Jefferson of the Johnson Institute a few miles to the northeast. A former teacher, she became a Texas Cattle Queen. The pair laid out an entire city, to be known as Hays City, in the C. M. Carpenter Survey, just south of the William B. Travis League.

<sup>34</sup> SMFP Vol 15 No 44 Thus Oct 14 1886

<sup>35</sup> Henry Wentworth Corbett was first employed by Colonel W.W. Haupt at Mountain City before being invited by Christian Wilhelm as tutor to his children. He later became a Baptist preacher and farmer.

<sup>36</sup> SMFP Vol 16 No 3 January 6, 1887

land where Bluff Springs School stood to Hays County. It was near the road and close to his south-east line.<sup>37</sup> In 1889, there were 23 pupils. <sup>38</sup>

Local girl, Nannie Dorroh, taught at Bluff Springs between 1896 and 1899. She had 30 pupils. The trustees at the time included Medicus “Penny” Johnson (son of John C. Johnson) and John Butler. Nannie Dorroh kept a diary which tells of religious rivals, very popular at the time, held at Bluff Springs. People came from miles around, pitching their tents for several days to listen to inspiring sermons. Young folks were eager participants, attending the services more for their social rather than religious focus. The school closed in the early 1900s as the center of population shifted north to Driftwood. <sup>39</sup>

It is obvious from the list of pupils at Bluff Springs as the 20th century dawned that descendants of the three men, John Butler, John C. Johnson, and Matthias Speed, who labored over producing shingles for Charles Travis, were still in the area. Mathias died in 1897, and Ann would follow him in 1909. She sold her property to Henry C. Whisenant in 1907.

John Butler had a 12-year-old son, Beverley, attending Bluff Springs School in 1900, and a five-year-old not yet at school. He had remained a bachelor until he was 51. John was born in Missouri on December 11, 1832, to Reece and Lucy (Meeks) Butler who bought property in the neighboring Thomas W. Moore league.<sup>40</sup> In 1860 and 1870, his sister, Elizabeth, and their 96-year-old grandmother, Winnie Meeks (96 in 1870), were living with him. In 1880, John and Elizabeth were back with their parents. Two years later, John took a teenage bride, Georgia Whisenant

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<sup>37</sup> Hays County Records OPR W /536

<sup>38</sup> SMFP Vol 16 No 35 Aug 29, 1889.

<sup>39</sup> Kyle News, April 20, 1928 - “A Meandering School’ by Judge Wilhelm who had been taught by Prof Corbett.

<sup>40</sup> Reece Butler was a blacksmith, wagon maker, a rock mason, a hunter, miner, fisherman and a farmer (p. 10 Rogers). He was also skilled in finishing cypress shingles when they were being readied for market. He claimed mesquite charcoal gave hotter fire than cedar—he used clay from Colorado for crucibles which he used to melt gold-tinged silver ore he would get at a silver mine on the Llano River about which a Native American told him. Once a year, Reece headed out alone in his wagon and about a month later returned. He took the ore to Bahn Jewelers in Austin. He never disclosed the secret location. See Butler Cemetery [FindaGrave.com](http://FindaGrave.com)

(1865-1928), 33 years his junior. They built a house on the south bank of Onion Creek.<sup>41</sup> John and Georgia were to have two sons, Beverley (1887-1938) and Lee (1894-1916) who died after an accident with a horse.. John Butler died on December 7, 1905, but the ranch would remain in Butler hands until Beverley's death in 1939.

According to family sources, Georgia (Whisenant) Butler had arrived in the Austin area from Georgia in the late 1870 in a wagon train consisting of her grandparents, parents, and siblings. Some of the menfolk headed to Colorado to work in the mines, but returned after two years, Virginia Jackson, died leaving him with four small children. Back in Texas, he married Viola Boyd and had ten more children. In 1907, he bought the Speeds' ranch. He built a molasses mill which functioned until about the time of his death in 1933. The remains can still be seen between the double crossings.<sup>42</sup> In 1908, Henry was troubled by wolves killing his animals.<sup>43</sup> He managed to trap one when Hezekiah Williams was holding a three-day-extravaganza in attempt to sell lots in his new Hays City after losing the bid to move the county seat. One of the billed attractions was a dog fight between Bluger, a white pit bull and Henry Whisenant's she-wolf. Betting was fierce as a good fight was expected. But, the wolf was in heat and the dog acted accordingly, *"right there before twenty-five hundred shocked sets of eyeballs. Scandalized, the throng quickly departed."*<sup>44</sup>

John and Georgia (Whisenant) Butler's older son, Beverley, was a shy man unlike his lively mother. He left a snapshot of his life in a diary he kept in 1908. His was a simple life, following the seasons, tending to his crops of cotton, corn, sorghum, and peanuts, his bountiful garden and orchard which included fig trees. He kept a few cattle, horses, and hogs. He often

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<sup>41</sup> Still used as a hunter's cabin in 1970.

<sup>42</sup> Onion Creek Free Press March 16, 1979

<sup>43</sup> Hays County had a wolf catcher until the 1960s Last recorded sighting of wolves, December 1966, was in the Travis League.

<sup>44</sup> Texas Women on Cattle Trails -, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Johnson Williams

hunted jack rabbits, squirrel, turkey, deer, mountain lion, and wolves. He foraged for dewberries and honey, recording six gallons of honey from one bee tree. The only forays out with his own ranch were next door to Uncle Henry's, hunting on other ranches, taking his mother and aunt to visit relatives in Kyle, to attend the Farmers' Alliance meetings in Driftwood, and the occasional overnight trip to Austin for supplies. The highlight of the year, as it was for the whole community, was the annual Confederate Reunion at Camp Ben McCulloch where Beverley camped for four days in August 1908.

A heart attack felled 50-year-old Beverley beside Onion Creek in 1938, the alarm raised by his riderless horse arriving home.<sup>45</sup> He was buried in the Butler Cemetery.

The Butler Cemetery was designated a Historic Texas Cemetery on December 6, 2000, and was recognized by a historical marker on 22 February, 2001.<sup>46</sup> It was originally referred to as the Onion Creek Cemetery. Although 66 graves have been identified, there may be more. The earliest known is that of one-year-old Ola Cannon, granddaughter of Mathias and Ann (Butler) Speed and John T. Jacks. Originally on the Johnsons' land, 250 acres containing the cemetery were sold on March 7, 1921, to Beverley Butler by Thomas Smith who had bought it from his brother, William Pitt Smith (1840-1916).<sup>47</sup> Both Thomas and William are buried in the Butler Cemetery. Only William has a stone, for service in the Civil War. He was a sergeant in Hood's 4th Texas Infantry, captured at Gettysburg, and imprisoned in Fort Delaware. When Beverley Butler's land was sold to Frank W. Zimmerman in 1939, the deed specified one acre be deducted for a cemetery. The current fenced area is just a over half-an-acre.

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<sup>45</sup> Wrong mother on his death certificate — Lucy Meeks should read Georgia Whisenant.

<sup>46</sup> It has been suggested that there are two unmarked graves of Butler slaves. Daniel and (Butler) Mayes were the only ones to own any— two boys, aged 13 and 17 in 1860.

<sup>47</sup> Hays County Records OPR 53 /287 and OPR 67/173. William and Thomas were the grandsons of Ezekial Smith (1781-1854) who served in the War of 1812, moved to Texas where he was then oldest member of the 1842 Mier Expedition. Luckily he drew a white bean and returned home to help found Seguin in Guadalupe County.

Frank W. Zimmerman owned the Grand Opera House and original Palace Theater in San Marcos and also served as mayor from 1949 to 1951. While visiting his new land, he may have been surprised to hear a Scottish brogue across the march. His neighbor, Donald McKenzie (1851-1938), came to Texas in 1870 from Ross-shire in Scotland. In 1880 he was farming in Travis County with a fellow Scot, also from Ross-shire, Alexander McDonald, whose sister, Isabella, became his bride. In July 1893, Donald McKenzie became the owner of 1,653 acres in the Upper Half of the William B. Travis League— an impossible dream for a farm labourer in 19th century Scotland.<sup>48</sup> The canny, hard-working McKenzies raised sheep, having 500 in 1900. They enclosed their land with rock fences reminiscent of the *dry-stane dykes* of their native land. Of Donald and Isabella’s four surviving children, only Kenneth married, buying his own place on Elder Hill Road. Daniel, Tom,<sup>49</sup> and daughter, Isabella, sold the property to Gatewood Newberry (1907-1988) in 1952.<sup>50</sup>

The Newberry family spent their weekends there, becoming involved in the Driftwood community. At the time, Driftwood participated in the Texas Community Improvement Program run by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, sponsored by electricity utility companies. The Newberry Triple C Ranch, managed by local rancher and WWII veteran, Syd Hall, embraced its slogan “*Better Homes on Better Farms for Better Communities*” wholeheartedly. It became a showplace, attracting many foreign visitors. In 1959, it consisted of 2,250 acres, 2,180 in pasture, 1,000 of which were improved, with 70 acres in oats. There were 110 beef cattle, 750 goats, 335 sheep, 15 laying hens and 3 dairy cows. Most significantly, screwworm was eradicated by introducing sterilized screwworm flies.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. OPR 31/24

<sup>49</sup> Tom served in World War I, as did other young men in the Driftwood area — including Johnson and Mayes descendants.

<sup>50</sup> Hays County Records - OPR 153/143. Newberry was a high school teacher and athletic coach before settling in Austin as a businessman and investor. After the Tarrytown Pharmacy opened in late 1942, he bought it, selling in 1950 to his brother, Jack.

The Triple C Ranch and the Zimmermans' Lazy Z still remain in family hands. However as the decades rolled on, growth in Austin once again impacted the area. The number of homeowners has increased in the William B. Travis League, but it still retains its rural beauty.

## SIGNIFICANCE

William Barret Travis never got the chance to build a history for himself by living on his property. Once his children parted with their inheritance, all family connection was lost, meaning that the significance of the William B. Travis Survey has largely gone unrecognized for 185 years.

Recently a group of local landowners realized development was rampant, former ranches being subdivided to accommodate the city of Austin's rapidly expanding population. The attraction to the fragile Hill Country had the potential to toll the region's death knell. Therefore, the enduringly close-knit community founded the Driftwood Historical Conservation Society (DHCS) *"to preserve and enhance Driftwood and the Onion Creek Valley's rural beauty, heritage, and sense of community and belonging."* One of its goals is *"preserving/restoring historical and heritage sites."* In 2018, the DHCS petitioned the Texas Legislature to designate part of RM 150W, which runs through the center of the William B. Travis League #15 Survey, as the William B. Travis Heritage Trail. Local residents, politicians, and the Hays County Historical Commission enthusiastically lent their support. On September 1, 2019, both houses of the Texas Legislature having unanimously passed Senate Bill 1221, the William B. Travis Heritage Trail passed into law and the signage was erected by the state.<sup>51</sup> The DHCS is currently working with the Hays County Commissioners Court and the state legislators to place the scenic William B. Travis Heritage Trail under the Texas State Highway Beautification program. The grant of a historical marker for the

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<sup>51</sup>Texas Senate Bill 1221/2019-2020/86th Legislature sponsored by Senators Campbell & Creighton and Representative John Cyrier stating —The portion of Ranch-to-Market Road 150 in Hays County between its intersection with RM 12 and its intersection with RM 3237 is designated as the William B. Travis Heritage Trail."

William B. Travis League would further draw attention to what has largely been an unknown part of the area's history. It would be much appreciated by the entire community.

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Figure 1.  
Original William B. Travis League Survey #15 from Texas General Land Office.



Note the original survey map points south, not north.

Figure 2 — adapted from Hays County Central Appraisal District Interactive Map, showing current boundary lines within the William B. Travis League. Note this map points north.

