

Houston County Newspapers

"THE CROCKETT PRINTER"

The first newspaper published in Houston County was owned and published by Oscar Dalton, who probably began the publication soon after coming to Crockett. The author did not know him personally but knew his family quite well. He married a widow by the name of Hall, who had two children, Mary Hall and Frank Hall, at the time of her marriage to Dalton. The first issue of *The Crockett Printer* was dated December 6, 1853, and it contained the following statement:

"THE CROCKETT PRINTER

Edited By the Publisher

Vol 1.

The Crockett Printer

Issued every Wednesday by Oscar Dalton, Proprietor.

At \$2.00 per Annum, invariably in Advance

Rates of Advertising:

One Square (10) lines 1 year \$15; 1 Square, 1 insertion \$1.00. Each Additional insertion, 50c. Announcing candidates for State or District offices, \$10.00; Announcing for County Offices, \$5.00.

All transient advertisements must be paid for at the time their insertion is ordered. A liberal discount will be made to yearly advertisers."

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In the first issue of the paper a contributor, writing under the name, "The Oldest Inhabitant," undertook to give a brief sketch of Crockett, up to that date. This contribution contains so much information about the beginning of Crockett, that it deserves a place here. It is as follows:

"A SKETCH OF CROCKETT.

"Unlike most historians, who depend upon preceding writers for their materials, the Oldest Inhabitant himself contemporary with Crockett, is enabled to note its rise and progress, free from the melancholy task of recording its decline and fall.

"Crockett was located at the county site of Houston County, in the winter of 1837, owing to its position to its being the only point within a reasonable distance of the San Antonio Road, and the center of the county, where running water could be found.

"It was emphatically a frontier village, but three hours ride from the buffalo range; for several years Indian outrages were committed in its vicinity. The Coshattas hunted on the South, the Cherokees joined the county on the East, while North and West the wild or Prairie Indians penetrated the sparse settlements almost unperceived, and too generally unpunished.

"A very narrow chain of settlements along the San Antonio road, formed the connection with the white population of Texas. This road, as is well known, passes through the poorest and worst watered portion of Houston County, giving no promise of a better country to the passing stranger.

"Distance from market (Trinity not being then navigated) danger from Indians and the usual inconvenience of a frontier country, long retarded the settlement of the county and the growth of the village.

"Although a log courthouse and jail were erected and the liberality of the legislature had granted a charter providing for the election of a mayor, eight aldermen, a town clerk, etc. yet for some months the solitary citizen, who kept a store in a 16-foot lot cabin, was daily asked, 'How far to Crockett?'

"'You are right in the public square of Crockett now, Stranger,' was the answer.

"In 1839 there were two resident families, and the danger from Indians was so urgent that the neighbors fortified the courthouse lot with pickets and took shelter with their families until immediate danger had passed over.

"For two years the sittings of the district court were suspended, during which time cases of assault and battery were so multiplied that succeeding grand juries declined to notice them.

"Card playing (not then prohibited) and quarter racing, were the favorite amusements on public days. The eastern and western mails arrived on an average of twice a month. The northern mail for Fort Houston was sent whenever there was

a chance, and then generally in the crown of a hat. The Galveston mail was once suspended for five months, and at last arrived in coffee sacks on an ox wagon.

"Sassafras tea, rye coffee, milk and whiskey, were the only beverages that could be depended on, as coffee frequently could not be had at any price. In the way of diet, steel mill bread and jerked beef were the great staples.

"Indian hardships and it is to be hoped, dissipation, have passed away forever from Crockett, and there is every indication that its course is onward and upward. The telegraph has entered our town, a substantial brick courthouse has just been completed, the Masonic Hall, Temple of Honor, and free church are well attended; six stores, two taverns, a boot and shoemaker, four smith shops, a wagon and three cabinet shops, a tanyard and saddler's shop accommodate the public; professional gentlemen offer their services to clients and patients, our bricklayers are busy and all the usual means and appliances of civilized life may be found in our village.

"Of the future of Crockett there can be but one opinion. With the increase of population of the county and the cultivation of its fine cotton lands, the wealth and the population of the village must increase.

"The very institution of a newspaper indicates the progress of Crockett, and there can be no doubt that its future pages will record a state of things, that will throw into the shade and almost render incredible these scanty reminiscences of the Oldest Inhabitant."

Mr. Dalton launched his enterprise under unusual difficulties and note the following from his first issue.

"OUR TROUBLES—We deem it a duty to our patrons to give the causes why the 'Printer' has been so long in showing himself to their admiring eyes; first, then, we failed in getting our materials up before the yellow fever broke out in Houston, after which it was impossible to get a wagon at any price here, we are compelled to acknowledge our indebtedness to Messrs. F. D. Bodenhamer, J. H. Gillespie, Steward, Dr. Corley, and last, though not least, Col. J. Long for their exertions in endeavoring to procure wagons for us; they succeeded in engaging four or five, but, from some unknown cause, they all declined, afterward, in this extremity Messrs. Inman, Johnson & Co., came to the rescue and placed our press, etc. upon one of their wagons, and here it is. Next came a demand on the merchants

for freight, and they paid up like princes, without a single exception.

"But the end is not yet, for some 'Blaggard' on the road near Houston stole our keg of ink, and placed us under the necessity of borrowing from our neighbors of the Trinity Advocate, may their sheet never be pale for the want of ink."

NEWSPAPERS

(Items From the Crockett Printer)

"We were pleased to see Dr. Kirchoffer enter our office last Monday, after an absence of some weeks. The doctor confirms the report that cholera is in New Orleans and also that several died at the wharf in Galveston. We fear that Galveston and Houston may witness another epidemic as dreadful as that just past."

"It would be well for us here to notice that Dr. Kirchoffer has brought us a lot of cards. We can now accommodate those of our friends who may desire a neat business card, circular or other job work."

"We are authorized to say that Bishop Andrews of the Methodist Episcopal Church will preach in Crockett the 18th inst. Sermon will commence at half past ten o'clock a. m."

"The Trinity Presbytery of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church convened on the 2nd inst. We could learn nothing more of their proceedings than that the Rev. D. W. Braughton was ordained. Eight congregations were represented and six ordained ministers were present. We understand that some arrangements were made for the establishment of a Presbyterian school in the bounds of the Presbytery."

(Note by Author: The Presbyterian school above referred to was later established at Tenhuacana, and was known as Trinity University. It is the same institution now located at Waxahachie in Ellis County.)

"Our thanks are tendered to our representative, Judge Randolph and Senator Jowers for public documents. We thought the judge would not forget us."

The following ad in the first issue of the Crockett Printer has sufficient historic value to justify including it here:

"NOTICE TO TRAVELERS—Travellers and emigrants going West are informed that the best and most direct road from

Shreveport and other points on Red River to Austin and San Antonio is through the Town of Rusk in Cherokee County. From the latter point an excellent road of twelve miles leads to Stinson's Ferry at which place ferry boats cross the Neches River constantly, causing no detention at any stage of water. Wagons, carriages, etc. are landed on high and dry roads, without any mud or river bottom to pass through.

"This is on the (mail route) main and principal road leading to Crockett, Hall's Bluff, Robbin's Ferry, Cincinnatti, Huntsville, Washington and from thence to Austin and San Antonio.

"From Grand Encore to Waco Village, the route lies through Sabine Town, San Augustine, Nacogdoches, Douglas, Linwood and Alto, on the San Antonio Road, from thence to Stinson's Ferry, from which place there is excellent road to Palestine, Magnolia and Parker's Bluff on to Springfield and Waco Village, from thence a fine road to San Antonio and Austin. There is at all times a plentiful supply of provender and forage on the route. No detention. Boats run at all stages of water.—Wm. N. Bonner.

"There is a House of Entertainment kept at the ferry. Every attention given to make man and beast comfortable, and there are various other food houses kept in the road.—W. N. B."

Another advertisement contains enough historic information about business conditions in Crockett at that time as to deserve mention here. It is as follows:

"DRY GOODS, GROCERIES, HARDWARE, ETC.

"COLLINS & BROTHER

"Are receiving a stock of goods purchased last month by their senior in New York, to which they request the attention of their customers, and the citizens of Houston County generally. It is by far the largest they have ever brought to this place, and embraces almost every article usually kept in stores in this country, viz:

WOOLEN, COTTON, SILK AND LINEN GOODS

"A large assortment of

"LADIES' FANCY GOODS, JEWELRY

"Their Assortment of YANKEE NOTIONS Is Unusually Large.

"Their stock of shoes, boots, ladies garters, slippers, boots,

is very large, having cost over \$2700 in New York. They also purchased large amount of clothing!

"Chinaware, Queensware and Glass, Saddlery, Books and Stationery, Groceries, Medicines, Ladies' Bonnets of the latest styles and trimmings to match. Men's and Boys' Hats and Caps in great variety.

"HARDWARE, CUTLERY, ETC., ETC.

"N. B.—They bought a large number of John Moore's Celebrated Ploughs, so well known and much approved in this country. Also extra points, landslides and mouldboards, which will be brought out as soon as the Trinity admits of navigation. Also a large stock of iron and steel, wagon boxes, etc. Crockett, Dec. 6-ly."

The firm of Collins & Brother above mentioned, conducted business where the Crockett Hotel now stands, and was composed of Thos. P. Collins and his younger brother, Dr. John Collins, who had previously been the second Chief Justice of Houston County in 1840.

Other leading merchants advertising in this copy of the Crockett Printer were A. T. Monroe, a pioneer merchant and citizen, and W. F. Wall whose store was located where the Crockett State Bank now stands.

The firm of Long & Downes, also had an ad in this issue of the paper, and was composed of Col. John Long, a pioneer citizen and L. E. Downes, who was district clerk of Houston County as early as 1852. Both of these pioneers spent the balance of their lives in Crockett and are both buried in the old Crockett Cemetery in Crockett.

Andrew Butts, a blacksmith, was also an advertiser in this issue of the paper, and stated that his shop was located at the fork of Rusk and Nacogdoches Road. That location was evidently where R. L. Shivers now has his store.

That first issue of the paper gave a list of the officers of Houston County as follows:

"The following is a list of officers for Houston County and also the time of holding court in said county, to-wit:

"John H. Reagan, Judge of the 9th Judicial District.

"James H. Gillespie, County Clerk.

"James M. Hall, District clerk.

"F. D. Bodenhamer, Sheriff.

"Mat J. Edmiston, Chief Justice.

"John Blair, A. E. Gossett, A. H. English, R. Matthews, county commissioners.

"A. C. King, coroner.

"The District Court for said county meets the first Mondays in March and September.

"The County Court for Roads and Revenues meets the third Monday in February, May, August and November.

"The County Court pertaining to Estates of deceased persons, etc. meets the last Monday in each month."

Other ads in this paper are as follows:

"HALL'S HOTEL, CROCKETT, TEXAS

"The proprietor of the above establishment is now prepared to entertain TRAVELLERS IN THE BEST MANNER the country affords. He has just completed a LARGE and COMMODIOUS STABLE which is contiguous to the house, and has a good and careful hostler, always in attendance.

"A well of good water in the horse lot."

Hall's Hotel was located at the Southwest corner of the public square where the K. of P. Lodge now stands.

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"YOAKUM & TAYLOR, Attorneys at Law.

Henderson, Yoakum, Huntsville—Wm. M. Taylor, Crockett.

"Crockett, Dec. 6, 1853-ly."

"S. A. MILLER, Attorney and Counsellor at Law

"Crockett, Texas.

"Will continue to attend promptly to such professional business as may be entrusted to his care in the District Courts of the 9th Judicial District and of the Counties of Cherokee and Trinity, also in the Supreme Court of the State at Tyler."

"Business Communication (pre-paid) will be punctually answered and attended to. Office at his old stand opposite the N. W. corner of the Public Square."

"DR. J. W. MEREDITH

"Having determined to make Crockett his home, offers his services to the public in various branches of his professions. Office over drug store upstairs."

The Crockett Printer in November, 1857, gave a description of Hon. John H. Reagan, who had but recently been elected to Congress and which description was published later in the Clarksville Standard under date of November 21, 1857, and is as follows:

"Hon. John H. Reagan came to Texas eighteen years ago, a poor, friendless stranger, wearing buckskin breeches and hickory shirts. He educated himself; he labored Saturdays, at night and the hours usually devoted to rest were spent in toil to pay for his schooling and the purchase of books. He split rails, drove oxen, toiled in farm fields, surveyed in a wild, unsettled country until he became inured to hardships; strict integrity and honesty marked his course and met its reward. He gradually rose from constable, higher and higher; admitted to the bar; was selected as the ablest man for the legislature, where he served faithfully; came back to the people and they made him judge of the Superior Court, he studied how to fill (sic) and administer the law; how well he succeeded is evident by his re-election to the same office; and almost immediately after to a higher post, the highest in the gift of the people of Eastern Texas—representative in the Congress of the United States—and is spoken of as having fair prospects before the Legislature for United States senator. Will he pause there? No. His energy and decision of character may yet place him in the presidential chair of these United States. John H. Reagan was nobody, no wealth, or influential friends to help him on—no wars to give him military fame—no crisis in affairs threw him to the surface—but, slowly he rose, by his own industry. Here, boys of Texas, is an example for you—. The Standard Clarksville, November 21, 1857, p. 2, c. 6."

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The Author is fortunate enough to have a second copy of The Crockett Printer, published under date of Wednesday,

November 11, 1860. It might be well to remember that this date was exactly 58 years before the Armistice of November 11, 1918.

Under the head of "The Election" the editor says:

"We condense from our different exchanges the returns of the election on last Tuesday into as small a space as possible. We are by no means disappointed at the results. We are indebted to Mr. Aldrich, County Clerk for this (Houston) County, and also the different postmasters for information of various precincts that we could not otherwise obtain. Houston County: Breckenridge 446, Bell and Everett 128. Precincts not received came in too late. Bennetts, Randolph and Antrem Church."

Then follows the return from a large number of Texas counties, giving the vote for President.

The following appears under the head of "Mail Arrivals and Departures."

"For the benefit of our readers we shall keep the following schedule of mail arrivals, and departures standing as a reference:

"The Nacogdoches four-horse stage bringing the 'States' mail arrives Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays; leaves at midnight of the same days.

"The Huntsville four-horse arrives Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays, bringing the Houston, Austin, San Antonio and Galveston mails, leaves next mornings at 4 o'clock.

"The Liberty stage arrives at midnight on Saturday, Monday and Thursday, leaves at 5 o'clock a. m. Friday, Sunday and Wednesday. This line brings the Galveston, Coast and New Orleans mail, supplies Sumpter, Livingston, Woodville, and in fact, the whole section of country between Liberty and Crockett.

"The last two mails, it will be seen, arriving on intermediate days affords us a daily mail with Galveston.

"The Shreveport four-horse stage arrives Sunday, Wednesday and Friday nights at 10 o'clock, leaves next days at 5 o'clock a. m. This stage brings the Rusk, Henderson, Marshall, Shreveport and intermediate places, as well as much of Louisiana and Arkansas mail.

"The Tyler mail arrives Sunday, Wednesday and Friday, leaves next day at 5 o'clock a. m. This line brings the mail from Palestine, Waco, Dallas and all northern Texas.

"The Keechi mail arrives on Sunday and leaves on Friday at 6 o'clock. This is a horseback mail and supplies Telegraph Mills, Navarro, Keechi, Ringgold and intermediate ports.

"The Anderson mail, horseback, arrives Tuesday at 12 Noon and leaves at 1 p. m. same day. This mail supplies Madisonville,

Elwood, Bedi, Midway, Troy and Anderson and Grimes Counties, with intermediate posts.

"The Nacogdoches horseback mail arrives on Tuesday at 12 M. and leaves at 1 p. m. same day. This mail supplies Randolph, Coltharps, Glenco, Shooks P. O. and intermediate posts.

"The Centerville mail, horseback, arrives Tuesday at 6 P. M. and leaves next day at 6 A. M. This mail supplies Centerville, Clapp's Creek, Leona, Kidd's Mills and Alto Springs, with intermediate posts.

"These are not the schedule days for the arrival and departure of several of the above mails, but the actual days they do arrive and depart; the connections are correct as they stand and we give them for the benefit of our readers.

"The Galveston mail, via Huntsville, reaches Houston on the second day after its departure from Crockett.

"The Galveston mail, via Sumpter, reaches Liberty on the second day after its departure from Crockett."

The following unusual and interesting item appears in this copy of the Crockett Printer:

"STOP THE MURDERERS !!

"My son, Miles Robinson, was, on the 21st day of May, 1860 waylaid and most brutally murdered by James L. Landrum and John W. Mathes. And at the same time and place, the same parties did with a club inflict great bodily violence upon my grandchild, Isham Tolbot, so that his life is despaired of. Now, any person arresting and delivering the above-named murderers to the Sheriff of Houston County, State of Texas, shall receive the above reward.

"Description: James L. Landrum is about 24 years of age, about 6 feet high, dark complexion and black hair, weighs about 175 pounds, has generally very weak eyes. John W. Mathes is about 23 or 24 years of age, about 6 feet 1 inch high, light complexion and light hair, weighs about 165 pounds, a great talker, and boaster, and a gambler—Elizabeth Robinson, Crockett, Texas, May 25, 1860."

The following item also has some historic value:

"TEMPLE OF HONOR

"The old stockholders of the Temple of Honor will find a cash purchaser for their entire stock in the Temple Building by applying to the subscribers.—W. F. and J. A. Corley."