



TARRANT COUNTY TXGENWEB

Barbara Knox and Rob Yoder, County Coordinators

Copyright © 2008-2012. All rights reserved.

Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

Dr. William E. Dorris

Compiled by Michael Patterson
Copyright 2008-2012. All rights reserved.

Dr. William E. Dorris, a well-known pioneer doctor in northeast Tarrant County, was a Confederate veteran who lived for many years at Grapevine.

A short article concerning his life was authored by Berry B. Cobb, Velma Hudson Henley, and Dr. B. B. Hollingsworth and was included in the Grapevine Area History (1979): *“Dr. W. E. Dorris, probably of Starkville, Mississippi, married Elizabeth Harmon, who was born in Mississippi, and they had five children, four of whom were: Oscar A., Roe, Florence Isabel (born February 15, 1856 in Starkville), and Thomas Benton (born December 22, 1859) who was their youngest child. Dr. W. E. Dorris was a physician in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, and was taken prisoner. His wife, Elizabeth, died in Mississippi during the war.*

“In October of 1870 Dr. Dorris started west from Mississippi (probably Starkville) with his children in a wagon train. They were three months enroute, arriving in Grapevine, Texas on January 19, 1871. Florence Isabel was nearly fifteen years old, and Thomas Benton was eleven years old when they arrived.

“Dr. W. E. Dorris later married Miranda Ferguson and five children were born to them, including Mrs. Sila May Cox, who lived in Fort Worth; Claude, a merchant in East Texas; and Lee, who was a traveling salesman for the King Candy Company and later lived in Grapevine

“Florence Isabel Dorris married Zebulon Jenkins, a merchant in Grapevine. Thomas Benton Dorris became a doctor, married Ann Eliza Caster, and practiced medicine at Grapevine for nearly thirty-three years.”

Dr. William E. Dorris was born March 14, 1832 in Alabama. Family sources at Ancestry.com say he was a son of James Harvey Dorris (1807-1878) and his wife, Martha Ann (Embry) Dorris (1804-1868). Census data suggest that James H. Dorris moved the family to Mississippi from Alabama soon after William was born.

The census taker in 1850 found the family living in the Southern Division of Carroll County, Mississippi. William was an eighteen-year-old student, the oldest of six children in the family; his sixty-three-year-old grandmother, Millie Dorris, was also living with the family. William probably grew up in comfortable circumstances; his father owned nine slaves at the time the census was taken.

When the 1860 census was taken, Dr. Dorris had married and he and his family were living in Township 17 of Choctaw County, Mississippi. His wife, Elizabeth, was born about 1832 in Alabama. They had four children with them in that year: John O. Dorris (born about 1854); Florence I. Dorris (born about 1856); James M. Dorris (born about 1858); and Thomas B. Dorris (born about November of 1859). William E. Dorris was already working as a physician by 1860. In that year, Dr. Dorris owned one slave, an eleven-year-old black boy, and his estate (personal and real) was valued that year at \$2,400.

It is interesting to note that in 1860, the total white population in Choctaw County, Mississippi was 6,767 while the total slave population in the county was 7,110.

The 1870 census in the Grapevine area where Dr. Dorris settled, was taken on July 25, 1870. The effects of the War and the move to Texas had reduced Dr. Dorris's estate by nearly eighty per-cent; his total estate was worth only \$500 in 1870. By 1870 he had married his second wife, L. M. Dorris. The couple had six children with them, all born in Mississippi: J. O. Dorris (a son born about 1854); F. I. (or J.) Dorris (a daughter born about 1855); J. M. Dorris (a son born about 1858); T. B. Dorris (a son born about 1861); R. L. Dorris (a son born about 1865); and S. H. Dorris (a son born about 1867).

In the 1880 census of Grapevine, Dr. and Mrs. Dorris are found with the following children in their home: Robert Lee Dorris (born about 1866); Franklin H. Dorris (born about 1868); Claude E. Dorris (born about 1872); and Martha A. Dorris (born about 1875).

When the 1890 census was taken, Dr. Dorris and two of his daughters were living in Precinct 4 of Denton County. The daughters were Martha A. Dorris (born in September 1875), and Sallie M. Dorris (born in May 1881).

Dr. Dorris was married twice, first to Elizabeth Harmon (probably about 1853), second to Louisiana Miranda Ferguson. Louisiana Dorris was born September 10, 1844 and died at Grapevine on August 10, 1888. She was buried in Grapevine Cemetery.

Dr. Dorris died September 2, 1905 and was buried in Grapevine Cemetery beside his wife, Louisiana. His father, who died in 1878, lies buried beside them. Several later members of the family are buried there as well.

An obituary for Dr. Dorris appeared in the Grapevine Sun on September 8, 1905: *"DIED. Dr. W. E. Dorris, who was stricken with apoplexy several days ago, and who hovered between life and death until last Saturday, when the end came and he died at his home in Roanoke. He was 73 years, 5 months, and 18 days old at the time of his death. His wife preceded him to the grave some 16 years. Dr. Dorris came from Mississippi to Grapevine in February, 1870, and made this his home*

and practiced medicine here for 18 years, when he moved to Roanoke where he resided the remainder of his life. He was a member of the Baptist church for 50 years and a member of the Masonic Order for 45 or 50 years. He leaves 9 children--6 sons and 3 daughters--besides other relatives and a host of friends to mourn his death. He was buried in Grapevine cemetery Sunday evening, Sept. 3rd, followed to the grave by a large concourse of sorrowing friends. Rev. E. S. Haynes, a life-long friend of the family, preached the funeral, after which the body was given in charge of his Masonic brothers, of whom there seemed to be a full attendance for the burial. We tender our sympathy to the bereaved ones, but [] our inability to say anything that would console them. We can only point them to the One upon whom Dr. Dorris leaned and trusted for support and comfort in time of affliction."

