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## THE DUGAN FAMILY: ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO EARLY GRAYSON COUNTY HISTORY

*by Lora Whiting Tindall and Dr. Clyde Hall*

The Dugan family, consisting of Daniel and Catherine (Vaden) Dugan and seven children, was the first family to settle and remain in that area of the Republic of Texas later designated as Grayson County. Dugan and his two adult sons qualified for land grants. Their league-and-labor featured acreage of prairie, cedar and oak forests, Mill Creek, and clear springs. The Dugans successfully met the challenges facing pioneer settlers, including Indian atrocities and epidemics of disease. In 2000, Dugan descendants continued to reside on the original homeplace on the banks of Mill Creek. Many others live in Grayson County and continue to have an impact on their communities; others have scattered. Some lie in the cemetery on the homeplace.

Grayson County was created in March 1846 by the first legislature of the State of Texas. During the days of the Republic the area that became Grayson County had been a part of Fannin County. Previously it had been within the undefined "Red River District," periodically under the flags of Spain, France, or Mexico.

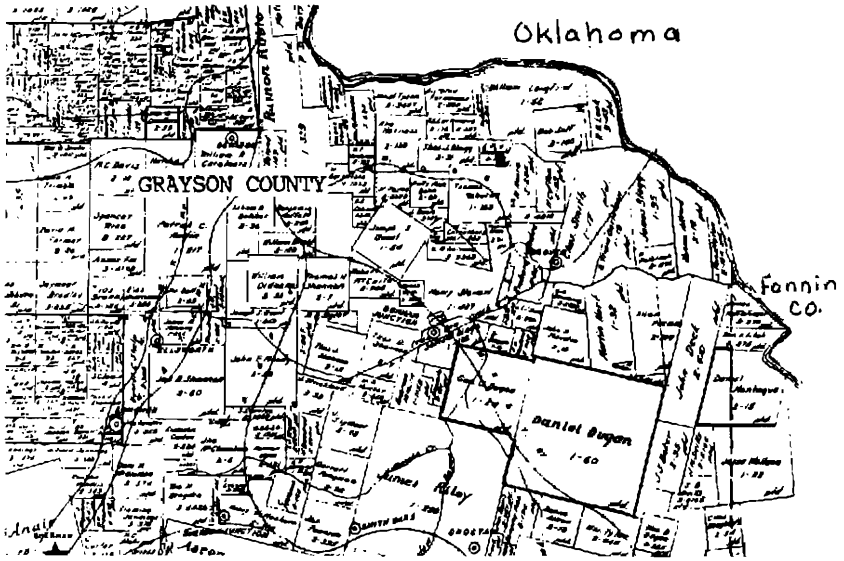
Red River, though by no means a dependable navigable waterway, was important in the initial settlement of Grayson County. Indian Removal had occurred prior to settlement and opposite Grayson County. The north bank of the river was occupied by the Chickasaw and Choctaw tribes. The first person to sink settlement roots in the county was Holland Coffee, an experienced Indian trader who established his trading post at the confluence of the Red and Washita (Faux Ouachita) rivers in the mid-1803s. Soon, Able Warren established another trading post downstream approximately twenty miles from Coffee and only few yards east of Grayson County. Warren located near the confluence of Red River and Choctaw Creek.<sup>1</sup>

On the Texas side of the Red River, this river-creek junction featured an extensive, relatively flat delta, commonly referred to as Choctaw Bayou. West and south of this delta was an arc of forested rolling hills through which flowed Choctaw Creek and its spring-fed tributaries. In Grayson County south, southwest, and west of the ring of hills was a blackland prairie.<sup>2</sup> By 1837, when pioneers began to reach the area, the northeastern quadrant of Grayson County beckoned to potential settlers with its fertile prairie, predominantly oak forests, multiple springs, rich delta, proximity to the Red River, and an "on the divide" trail to the east.

The first pioneer family known to arrive in Grayson County was that of Daniel Montague, who settled close to Warren's trading post in November 1837.<sup>3</sup> Within two decades, Montague moved his family beyond the "Eastern Cross Timbers" to Cooke County; as a surveyor his work took him into the area to the west of Cooke County, leading to the naming of Montague County

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Above: General Land Grant Office, Austin

Left: Fall of 1993, photo of Haynes W. Dugan taken at rededication of Rives family cemetery at Bonham's Landing, Caddo Lake.

for him. So far as is known, there is no branch of the Montague family that has maintained residence in Grayson County since pioneer days.

The second pioneer family to arrive in Grayson County was that of Daniel and Catherine Dugan, and their four boys and three girls. Having emigrated from Missouri, and after having tarried a while on Bois d' Arc Creek in Fannin County, the Dugan family settled in Grayson County in 1838.<sup>4</sup> The family selected a large land area that included the prairie, rolling hills with their forests plentiful with wild game, and the spring-fed Mill Creek, a tributary of the Choctaw. Dugan received his patent for a full league of land from the Republic of Texas on December 1, 1845. Unlike the Montague family, the Dugan family remained in Grayson County and Dugan descendants continue to reside on land where the Dugan family first settled and are recognized as representatives of the oldest pioneer family with continuous residence in the northeastern quadrant of Grayson County.

As it evolved, the Dugan homeplace featured a sturdy, sizable, dog-trot cabin, built with protection as well as comfort in mind.<sup>5</sup> While the homeplace served as the focal point for raising a large family, it also made major contributions to the early history of northeastern Grayson County. As there were no churches in the area during Republic days, Dugan welcomed itinerant preachers who arrived periodically and conducted worship services. A trail, with a southeast-northwest axis, extended from the prairie to the Choctaw Creek bottomlands, passing by the homeplace; word would spread of an impending worship service and other settlers would follow the trail to the Dugan homeplace. In time, the trail became known as Dugan Chapel Road, a county road that has carried that name for more than a century and a half. A year or so before statehood, the Virginia Point Methodist Church was founded approximately three miles east of the homeplace and became the gathering place for community worship.<sup>6</sup> Among the organizers were Dugan family members, and in 1846 a member of the family was baptized there.<sup>7</sup> Thus did the Dugan family contribute to the religious life of early settlers.

During the Republic period, northeastern Grayson County sometimes had to survive a less than peaceful relationship with Indians.<sup>8</sup> The Dugan homeplace, with its solidly constructed cabin and outbuildings, provided a gathering point where settlers could come for protection and Dugan family members exercised a leadership role in the effort to reduce tension. Dugan also set aside a portion of his land as a cemetery for burial of Dugan family members and others who were killed in those troublesome times. For more than one hundred and fifty years, the cemetery has been maintained as a burial ground primarily, but not exclusively, for Dugan descendants. In 1840, Dugan served on the first grand jury convened in the Republic's Fannin County.<sup>9</sup>

Several next-generation Dugans also made contributions to the history of Grayson County. In 1849, Catherine Dugan married B.W. Taylor, a Methodist minister and an educator. After their marriage, they settled in Sherman and opened what is believed to be Sherman's first school in 1851. Children of several pioneer families attended this school.<sup>10</sup>

George C. Dugan, the eldest Dugan son, also married in 1849. While retaining his land, he soon moved to Sherman where he became highly successful with mercantile and real estate interests. Tom Bomar, writing in 1894, stated that "Mr. Dugan ... accumulated quite a fortune previous to the civil war."<sup>11</sup> Among his contributions to the county's early history was his service in 1846 as a commissioner, appointed by the first Texas legislature, to determine the location of the county seat for Grayson County.

The town of Bells was, for much of the latter half of the nineteenth century, a small settlement located on Dugan land; it was known then as Duganville or Dugansville. With expansion of railway systems in Grayson County, George C. Dugan provided land for the construction of a side track and depot "at or near the Town of Duganville, Grayson County ... "on April 12, 1878.<sup>12</sup> Also in 1876, he donated to Austin College a full section of land in fulfillment of his pledge to the effort of Sherman to entice the college to move from Huntsville "in consideration of the location of the Austin College within the incorporated limits of the City of Sherman, State of Texas, Grayson County, which I herein acknowledge has been done by the trustees of said College in full compliance on their part ... I, G.C. Dugan ... do ... convey unto the said Trustees ... the following... 640 acre tract ... ."<sup>13</sup>

Other members of the Dugan family were also influential in the development of Bells (Duganville). In 1882 and again in 1886, William P. Dugan and Daniel D. Dugan provided two acres plus two lots for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Trustees of the church were free to use the land for "church, parsonage, and other church purposes."<sup>14</sup> Additionally, Daniel D. Dugan was active as an elected official in Sherman's city government as an alderman and chairman of the "utilities" committee for several years.<sup>15</sup>

Emily Dugan, a teenager when the family settled in Texas, married Frederick P. Whiting and had one son, George Dugan Frederick Whiting. Emily and her husband both died when their son was an infant. The son, G.D.F. Whiting, was raised by the Dugan family and was also influential in the development of northeastern Grayson County and Bells (Duganville). In 1895 he donated one and one-half acres for the establishment of Grayson County School District #112 to Grayson County. This acreage was located "on the waters of Choctaw Bayou being a part of the survey originally granted to Daniel Dugan ... ."<sup>16</sup> J.N. Dickson, former County Judge of Grayson County and author of a manuscript "Grayson County Common Schools," "District No., 112; Name: Dugan. Derived from: Named for the Dugan family. Location of School: School district bounded on north by Cherry Mound, South by Hebron, west by Choctaw Bayou. School house is in Daniel Dugan Survey No. 327."<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, Whiting provided land in Duganville for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and the Knights of Pythias lodges. In 1895, he conveyed one-half of lot #1 of block of the Town Plat of Duganville to the trustees of Ridgeley lodge #275 IOOF;<sup>18</sup> in 1896 the other one-half interest of this lot was conveyed to the Knights of Pythias Lodge #209.<sup>19</sup> In 1901, he provided another lot to the two organizations jointly "to the trustees of the Ridgeley Lodge

#275 IOOF and trustees of the Bells Lodge of Knight so Pythias #209 ... in the town of Duganville (now Bells) Grayson County, Texas."<sup>20</sup>

While not a direct contributor to the early history of Grayson County, another Dugan descendant, Haynes Webster Dugan, has continued the association of the family with the preservation of its history. He was instrumental in obtaining an official Texas Historical Commission marker for Webster/Blocker Cemetery at Mimosa Hall in Harrison County. He also served as division historian of the Third Armored Division, U.S. Army.<sup>21</sup> In recent years, Grayson County members of the Dugan and Whiting families have served on the boards of the Bells Independent School District and of Frontier Village of Grayson County. Finally, linking the county's early history and its present emphasis on historical preservation, a Dugan descendant was an active participant on the Grayson County Millennium Committee.

In the history of Grayson County, and particularly its northeastern quadrant from Choctaw Bayou to modern Bells, formerly Duganville, the Dugan family has made notable contributions. In the early pioneer period, while primarily concerned with surviving on the frontier, the family provided a meeting place for worship services, joined in the founding of the first organized church in the area, led in the effort to resolve Indian problems, set aside land for a cemetery, provided a commissioner for locating Sherman as the county seat, and provided a member of the area's first grand jury. The family contributed land for the establishment of a county school in Choctaw Bayou and in what is now Bells and for the Methodist church, the IOOF Lodge, the Knights of Pythias Lodge, and for a railway siding and depot. Additionally, as a leading businessman in Sherman, a family member donated land to Austin College upon its move to Sherman. Yet another member served in Sherman city government for several years. Younger members of the family continue to serve in leadership roles in a variety of county organizations. The Dugan family, as much as any other pioneer family, has contributed significantly to the history of Grayson County.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Mattie Davis Lucas and Mita Holsapple Hall, *A History of Grayson County, Texas* (Sherman, Texas, 1936), pp. 14-43.

<sup>2</sup>Fred M. Bullard, *The Geology of Grayson County, Texas* (Austin, Texas, 1931), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Graham Landrum, *An Illustrated History of Grayson County, Texas* (Fort Worth, Texas, 1967), p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Landrum, *An Illustrated History of Grayson County, Texas*, p. 10. For a far more extensive description of the Dugan family, its composition, and its westward migration, see Grayson County Frontier Village, *The History of Grayson County, Texas* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1979), v. I, p. 276-278.

<sup>5</sup>Mary Dugan Shearer, "Reminiscences of Pioneer Life in Grayson County," Lucas Collection (Sherman Public Library, unpublished manuscript, Box 1, Folder 24), hereinafter Lucas Collection. In 1885-1886, Shearer, granddaughter of Daniel and Catherine Dugan, authored a series of papers on this topic. A copy of these papers has been retained in the Lucas Collection.

<sup>6</sup>Sherman Public Library Vertical File, "Churches," *Sherman Daily Democrat*, August 2, 1929.

<sup>17</sup>Sherman Public Library Vertical File, "Churches," *Sherman Daily Democrat*, August 2, 1929.

<sup>18</sup>The relationship between pioneer "Grayson County" families and Indians has been well chronicled elsewhere. Lucas and Hall, *A History of Grayson County, Texas*, pp. 66-67; Landrum, pp. 10-14; Lucas Collection, folder 41, 42.

<sup>19</sup>Landrum, *An Illustrated History of Grayson County, Texas*, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup>Lucas Collection, "Autobiography of Jesse P. Loving," p. 16.

<sup>21</sup>Tom Bomar, "Glimpses of Grayson," Lucas Collection, Box 6, Folder 140. For a lengthy, detailed description of his estate, see *Deed Records of Grayson County, Texas*, Volume 59, pp. 10-29.

<sup>22</sup>*Deed Records of Grayson County, Texas*, Volume 38, p. 503.

<sup>23</sup>*Deed Records of Grayson County, Texas*, Volume 35, p. 153.

<sup>24</sup>*Deed Records of Grayson County, Texas*, Volume 55, pp. 102, 103; Volume 69, pp. 135, 136.

<sup>25</sup>Lucas Collection, Box 6, Folder 139, "Scrapbook of Clipped Biographies," p. 4, undated, approximately 1920.

<sup>26</sup>*Deed Records of Grayson County, Texas*, Volume 110, p. 243.

<sup>27</sup>J.N. Dickson, *Grayson County Common Schools*, p. 30.

<sup>28</sup>*Deed Records of Grayson County, Texas*, Volume 115, p. 362.

<sup>29</sup>*Deed Records of Grayson County, Texas*, Volume 119, p. 229.

<sup>30</sup>*Deed Records of Grayson County, Texas*, Volume 143, p. 241.

<sup>31</sup>The University of Illinois has a center for Third Armored Division studies; for reference to Dugan as division historian see <http://www.library.uicu.edu/ahx/3rdarmor/Holdings.htm>. Altogether, five generations of Dugan descendants have served in U.S. military forces.