

4. The Meadors and Meltons – A Family Goes to War

William Obadiah Meador and his wife, Mary Sarah “Polly” Vines Meador migrated to Green County (later became Hale County), Alabama with at least seven of their eight children in 1823. The family had moved many times over the years. A ninth child was born in Green County. William was a slave owner.

Elijah Melton lived in Green County with his wife, Ann Green Melton and their five children when the Meadors arrived. Elijah also had nine children from his previous marriage to Elizabeth Batson who were all born in Georgia but the family moved to Alabama in 1818. Elijah was also a slave owner.

The older Meador children were of a marrying age when they arrived in Alabama and it wasn't long until at least two of them hit is off with the Melton family. Two of the Meadors married Elijah Melton's children from his first marriage. Sarah Mobley Meador married William Melton in 1819 or 1820 and Clement Meador married Olive Crabtree Melton in 1824.

Although they were landowners in Green County, the younger Meadors and Meltons and their offspring began to migrate to other areas within a few years. William and Sarah Melton moved to Sumter County, Alabama where William entered the mercantile business for several years. He then turned to farming for a number of years. By 1842 William and Sarah had moved to Pontotoc County, Mississippi where William was engaged in farming. He was elected to the Mississippi state legislature in 1848. He apparently served only one term because he and Sarah Melton moved to Navarro County, Texas in 1850. The move was likely influenced by William's cousin, Ethan Melton, who had moved to Texas in the late 1830's. He had gone to the area to settle the estate of his brother, Eliel, who was killed in the Battle of the Alamo. Ethan evidently liked the area and decided to make his home there. He was instrumental in establishing Navarro County.

William Melton was a staunch democrat and soon became involved in Navarro County politics, serving as a delegate or a committeeman as the need arose. He was elected to the Texas state legislature in 1854.

Clement Meador and family had moved to Clear Creek, Arkansas. Their daughter, Elizabeth and her husband, James Westmoreland Jones also lived in Clear Creek. Olive Meador died in 1852 and Clement moved to Navarro County, Texas likely at the urging of his sister and brother-in-law, Sarah and William Melton. Clement married Martha Hunt in 1854. James Jones and his family also moved to Navarro County, Texas in 1852.

There were several Meador and Melton families listed in Navarro County census in 1860, all working as farmers, and it appears many of them settled there for the rest of their lives. One in four families in Navarro County owned slaves at this time. It is not known whether the Melton and Meador families owned slaves but it is possible.

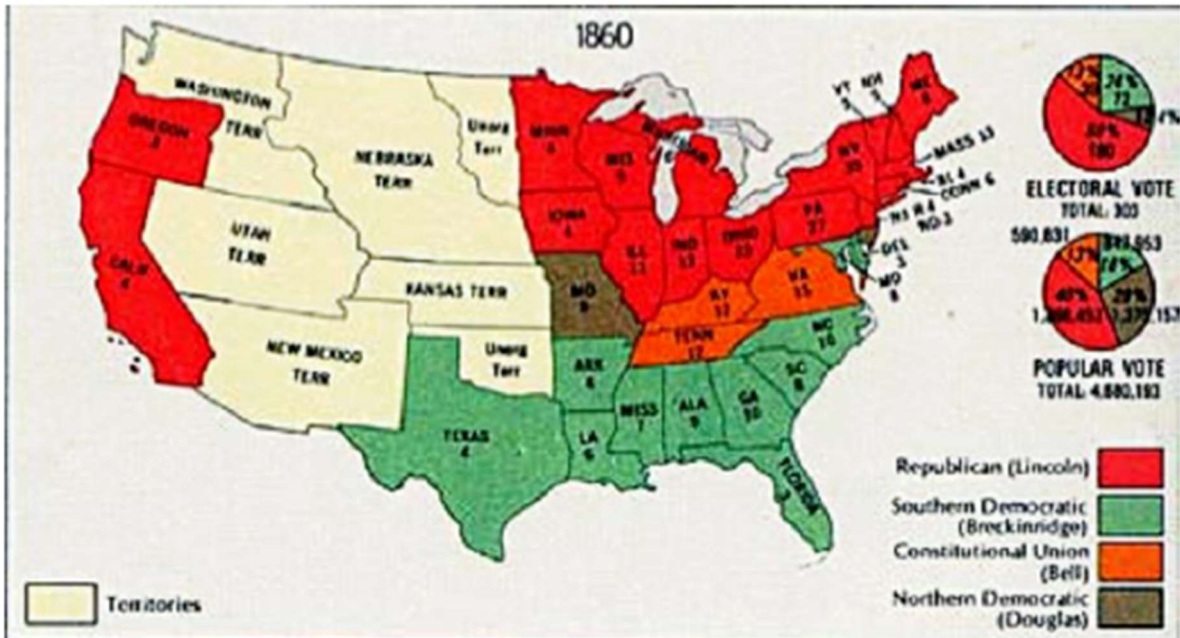
Navarro County, Texas was established in 1848 and was named after Jose` Antonio Navarro, a hero of the Texas revolution and one of the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence. Navarro was given the privilege of naming the county seat and he chose the name Corsicana after the island Corsica, the birthplace of his parents. The town was centered near a log tavern built in 1847. The first courthouse was a log cabin built in 1849. By 1850, the town's population had grown to about 1200 and the Navarro County population was 2190; about 250 of these were



Cotton Pickers (1850's)

black, presumably slaves. The Navarro County population grew to 5996 by 1860 of which 4105 were white. In 1861 there were 1,920 slaves in the county valued at \$3,440,000. The slaves were primarily used in agriculture. The main crops included cotton, corn, tobacco, peaches, sweet potatoes, and pecans. Cattle, hogs and poultry were also raised.

Like most of the south, the citizens of Corsicana supported Vice-President John C. Breckinridge in the 1860 presidential election. The southern democrats and the northern democrats could not agree on the best choice to oppose Lincoln. The northern democrats supported Stephen Douglas. Although he was pro-slavery, the southerners were unhappy with him because he supported giving the territories a choice regarding slavery. The democratic convention was bitterly divided and disbanded when the southern delegates walked out. Six weeks later, the northern democrats reconvened and selected Douglas as their presidential candidate while the southern democrats selected Breckinridge in a separate convention. John Bell, a Tennessee slaveholder who represented a group that felt it best for the government not to take a stand on the issue of slavery, rounded out the ticket. With the division in the opposition side, Lincoln was elected with only 40% of the popular vote and by a margin of 4 electoral votes. A few weeks later, South Carolina seceded from the Union.



The votes of the Electoral College were split among four candidates in the 1860 presidential election. The states that Lincoln won are shown in red, Breckenridge in green, Bell in orange and Douglas in brown.

(Source: ushistory.org, "The Election of 1860")

The independent spirit in Navarro County obviously extended beyond the legacy of its namesake. As soon as the news of the election of Abraham Lincoln reached Navarro County, the citizens of Corsicana lowered the flag of the United States and hoisted the Texas flag in its place. In the secession election in February 1861, the vote in Corsicana was 213 in favor and only three opposed.

When the war began in April 1861, there was a large demonstration in the courthouse square along with a strong appeal for volunteers to serve in the confederate army in Virginia. Some 450 Navarro citizens enlisted in early 1861 and more would follow; 60% of the white males in Navarro County wore a confederate uniform. The county commissioners appropriated funds to provide food and ammunition for the soldiers as well as support for their families.

THE NAVARRO EXPRESS.

R. A. VAN HORN,]

Devoted to *Politics, News, Literature, Science, Morality, Agriculture, &c.*

[PROPRIETOR

VOLUME 1.

CORSICANA, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1860.

NUMBER 52.

[From our Extra of last Tuesday.

LINCOLN IS ELECTED

He has received 156 Electoral Votes—four more than necessary to elect!

The North has gone overwhelmingly for NEGRO EQUALITY and SOUTHERN VASSALAGE! Southern men, will you SUBMIT to the DEGRADATION?

Upon the announcement of the news here, the Lone Star banner was raised high on a pole, and once more given to the winds of heaven. As the breeze caught its folds and threw them out, it was greeted by the ringing of bells, the firing of anvils, and the wild and enthusiastic shouts of a people DETERMINED TO MAINTAIN THEIR HONOR. A paper was handed around and signed by every man present, calling a public meeting of the County to determine on our course; when last seen it had sixty names. A Grand Public Ground Swell for Liberty will be had in Corsicana on Saturday, the 24th day of November.

Every man to the breach!

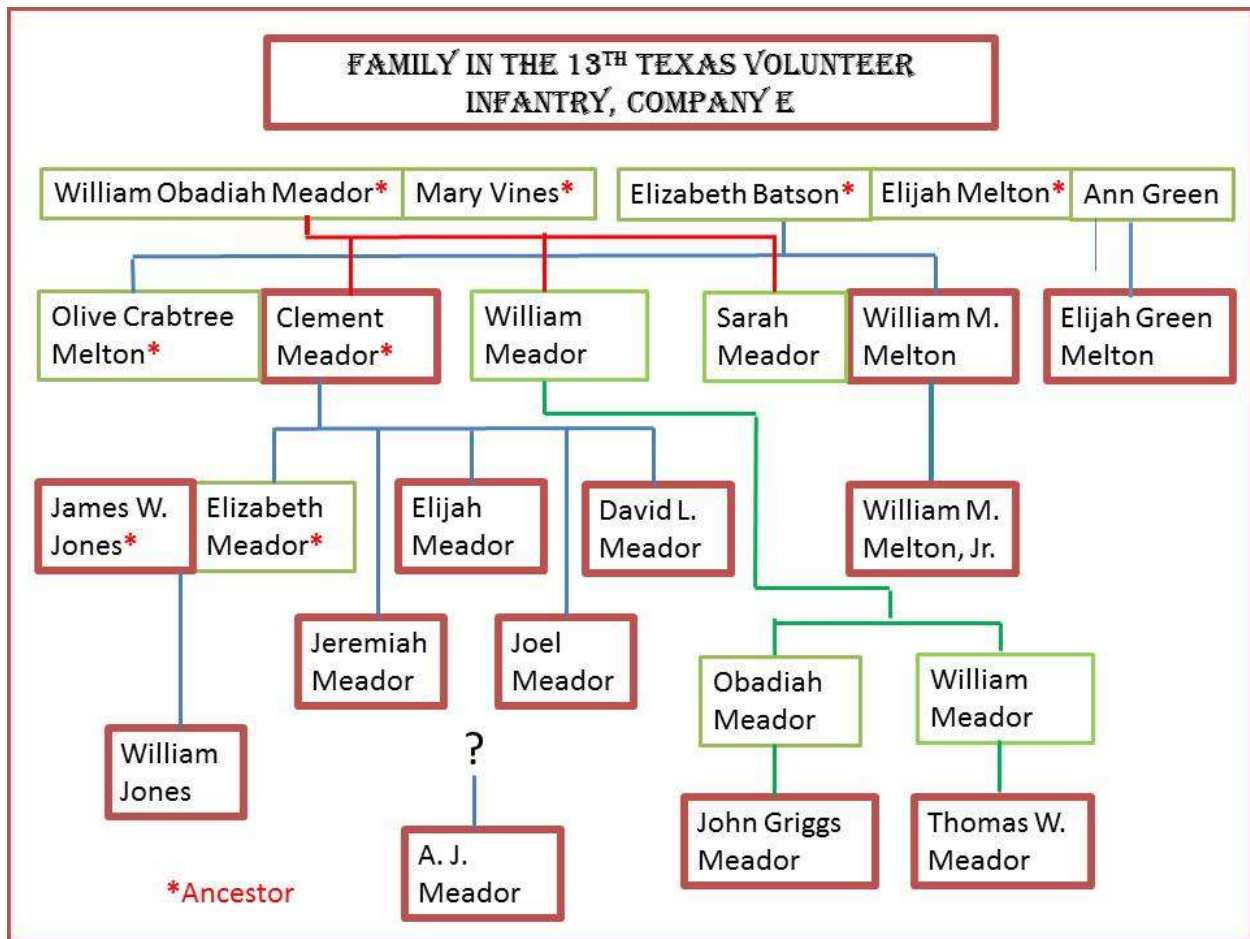
“Strike till the last armed foe expires!
Strike for your altars and your fires!
Strike for the green graves of your sires,
God and your native lan!”

Of course, the generosity of the commissioners would result in a cost to someone. On October 1, 1861, the assessment for the Confederate War Tax was conducted in Navarro County. The tax was 50 cents for every \$100 worth of property of any kind. The county commissioners levied a tax of 12½ cents per \$100 in 1862 and \$1.00 per \$100 in 1863. The Navarro citizens would periodically pay other taxes of various types throughout the war.

The first company organized for the “War for Southern Independence,” the “Navarro Rifles,” was organized in August 1861 and became Company 1 of the Fourth Texas Volunteer Infantry. Eventually, four additional companies would be organized in Corsicana by 1863.

According to one source (Reference 12), the volunteers held an election and named William Melton, Captain; J. R. Oglebie, First Lieutenant; and J. J. Hill, Second Lieutenant. E. L. T. Meador (relationship to Clement not known) was one of Navarro Rifles volunteers. It is recorded that, “*William Melton considered himself too old for the responsibility of command and was soon replaced by 40-year-old attorney and ex-legislator,*

Article in the Navarro Express, Nov. 16, 1860.
Published in Corsicana



Clinton M. Winkler. *The Navarro Rifles went into camp to train at Spring Hill, near the present town of Dawson.* Within a month the “Navarro Rifles” had arrived in Richmond, Virginia to support the Confederate Army.

It seems unlikely that the reason for William Melton’s replacement as Captain of the Navarro Rifles was that he considered himself to be too old to lead an infantry company. By the beginning on October, William began to gather volunteers and form an encampment. Company E of the 13th Volunteer Infantry was formed in Navarro County on October 23, 1861. William Melton was appointed Captain of the company just three weeks before his sixty-third birthday. It was not surprising the new soldiers looked to “Uncle Billy”, as he was addressed by almost everyone who knew him, for leadership for the new company. He had learned how to relate to the public in his experience in the retail business; he had learned patience and diligence as a farmer; he had learned leadership as a father of eight children; he had learned public service, negotiation, compromise and influence as a legislator in two states; and he learned patriotism at the knee of his grandfather, Jeremiah Moses Melton, who was a soldier in the North Carolina Militia during the Revolutionary War.

Not only did William sign up to provide leadership to the fledgling unit, he brought numerous family members with him, whether through recruitment, inspiration, or a shared commitment to the cause. His son, William Jr., his brother, Elijah Green Melton, and his brother-in-law, Clement Meador also signed on. In turn, they were joined by Clement's sons, Elijah, David, Joel, and Jeremiah, and his son-in-law, James Westmoreland Jones. Clement's grandson, William Jones, also signed on.

Another brother-in-law of William Melton, William Meador had two grandsons, John Griggs and Thomas Meador, who joined Company E. David Meador was married to Mary Brumbelow whose brother, Marvin also signed on. J. L. Brumbelow and A. J. Meador with unknown connections were also among the new recruits.

This company was known at various times as Captain Melton's company, Captain Clark's Company and Company E, Bates Regiment, Texas Volunteers; and Company E, 13th Regiment Texas Infantry. The unit was initially assigned to the Department of Texas and Captain Melton commanded the company from October 23, 1861 to February 28, 1862.

Even before the unit was completely formed, Melton had the full support of the county. From the County Commissioners Report:

October 7, 1861: Special Term of County Court

Presiding is S. J. Kerr, Chief Justice of Navarro County.

It is ordered by the court that One hundred and sixty five dollars be appropriated or so much thereof as may be necessary for the transportation of Captain Melton's Company to Milican ... To be paid as regular county orders. It is ordered by the Court that the Chief Justice issue his warrant upon the Treasurer for thirty-five dollars to A. Duren of the Committee of Arrangements, to purchase provisions for said Company...

It is ordered by the Court that Captain Wm. Melton's Company be allowed the fifty two Minute Muskets belonging to Navarro County to be tendered to the Confederate Government officers at cost and the carriage to Galveston, Texas.

January 1, 1862: It is ordered by the Court that A. I. Smith be paid the sum of sixteen dollars for transportation of Captain Melton's Company to the depot: also that the sum of sixteen dollars be paid to Robert D. Anderson for transporting of Captain Melton's Company to the depot.

Also it is ordered that J. D. Brown be paid the sum of fourteen dollars for tin-ware furnished to Captain Melton's Company. Also, be it ordered that H. C. Mop be paid seven dollars and fifty-seven cents for stationary.

*Signed S. H. Kerr
Chief Justice of and for
Navarro County.*

Various other entries document miscellaneous payments made on behalf of Melton's company, as well as other units from Navarro County, for transportation, provisions and supplies.

The company was transferred to the 15th Texas Volunteer Infantry (also known as Colonel Joseph W. Speight's Infantry Regiment) on April 16, 1862 and became Company E of that unit.

William's son, Obadiah, enlisted in Company G of the 15th Infantry which was formed within a few weeks after the William Melton's company was transferred to the 15th. Another man named William Melton also joined Company G. Additionally, William V. Meador – probably the son of Clement's brother, William – and James R. Meador – relationship unknown – also enlisted in Company G.

William Melton may not have considered himself to be too old to serve as Captain but the Army of the Confederate States of America did.

*"In 1862, a conscription law was passed by the Confederate States Congress. Under its provisions all males from 18 to 45 years of age were to be placed in the service, except ministers, state, city and county officers and certain slave owners. All persons holding 15 slaves, or over, were exempt. This provision gave rise to the saying that the struggle was the "rich man's war and the poor man's fight." It caused much discontent and severe criticism."*¹

William Melton was discharged from the CSA army because he was over the age limit and he spent the rest of the war as a recruiter. Judging from his initial success and the large number of soldiers from Navarro County, he was likely quite successful in that capacity. Although, to be fair, it must be conceded that the conscription law afforded certain advantages to a recruiter.

¹ <http://www.forttumbleweed.net/texasconfederacy.html>

The "Greyback"

The Confederate dollar was first entered into circulation in April 1861 when the confederacy was only two months old and the Civil War had not yet begun. The currency was not backed by hard assets but it was merely to pay the bearer the face amount after the conclusion of the war. Confederate currency was essentially a bet that the South would be victorious. Almost every Confederate note was hand signed and numbered. Confederate Treasury Notes were hand signed by various clerks, with exception of the 50 cent issues that had the printed signatures. The first six notes issued were hand signed by Robert Tyler and Edward C. Elmore, the Register and Treasurer, themselves. While hand signatures were considered an anti-counterfeiting tool, the sheer number of bills being produced could not reasonably be signed individually by two men each. Women were often hired as clerks to sign "for Register" and "for Treasurer"; up to 200 clerks were eventually hired for each. It is not uncommon for these notes to have uneven or rough borders since scissors or shears were used to hastily cut the sheets of notes apart.

At first the Confederate Dollar, nicknamed "The Greyback" was readily accepted as a medium of exchange throughout the south. As confidence in the prospects of a Confederate victory waned, the confidence in the Greyback also diminished. The different states issued their own currency and even some banks issued notes which made counterfeiting relatively easy. The north contributed to this problem by printing counterfeit notes and distributing them throughout the south. These factors led to significant inflation and the purchasing power of the confederate dollar continued to diminish. Bartering and the black market Northern "Greenbacks" began to take over as the prominent media of exchange. By the end of the war Confederate currency was completely worthless.

Confederate currency is now quite valuable as collectors' items with even the counterfeit bills commanding high prices. Those who burned millions of confederate dollars at the end of the war may have done their descendants a disservice.



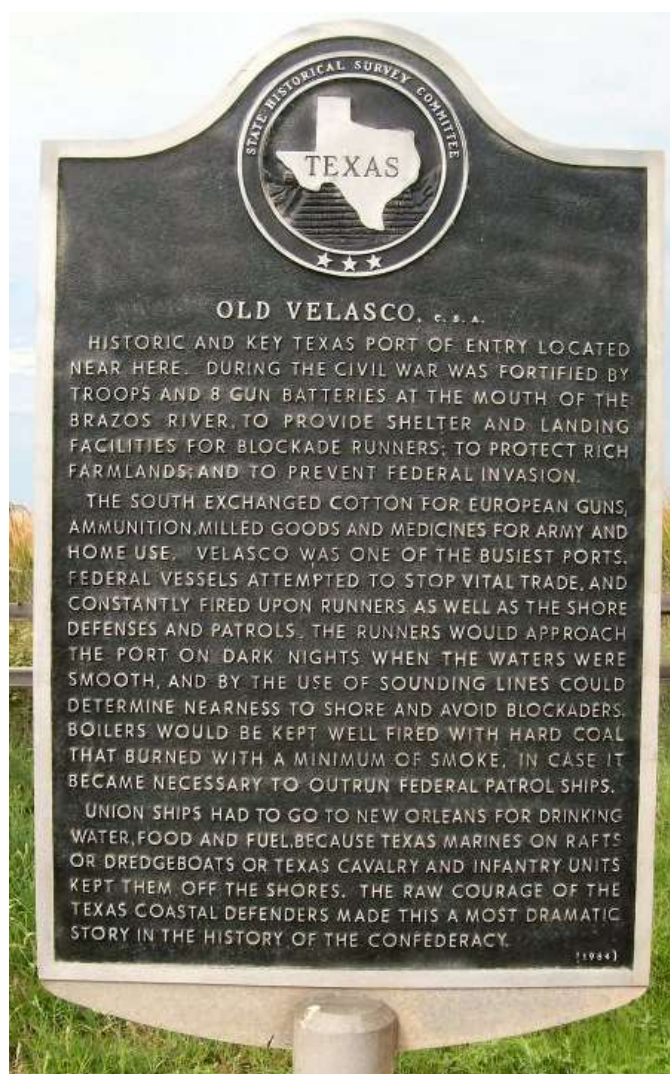
Navarro County Bank Note

Like William, Clement Meador, who was described as 5'8" tall with a fair complexion, blue eyes and gray hair, was considered too old at 61 years of age and was discharged. James Westmoreland Jones, Clement's son-in-law, who had been elected a corporal by his company, was discharged in July 1862 because he was 45 years of age. James was paid \$29.00 to cover travel expenses and \$16.83 for clothing in addition to being paid for four month's service. William's half-brother, Elijah Green Melton is also reported to have been discharged because he was "overaged" although he was only 40 years old in early 1862. There may have been other circumstances that led to his discharge that were not recorded. There were others, younger than 45, who were discharged because of their age and some older who were not.

William Jones, James Jones's son and Clement Meador's grandson, was only 16 when he enlisted on April 12, 1862 and was appointed the drummer for the company. It was a short career for him as he was discharged on April 16 because he was underage. He died at the age of 18 in 1864 but the cause is not known. It is possible that he reenlisted at a later time and died as a soldier but that is only speculation.

The 13th Texas Infantry was involved in a battle at San Luis Pass on April 5 and 6, 1862. San Luis Pass is a narrow water passage at the southern tip of Galveston Island, connecting West Bay and the Gulf of Mexico and separating Galveston Island from the Texas mainland. This was the site of several battles during the war. Both the Union and Confederate armies were in control of Galveston at different times.

Following that battle the 13th was stationed at Fort Velasco at the mouth of the Brazos River just a few miles to the southwest. Velasco was an important seaport during the civil war and important to the confederate supply line.



Although Melton's Company was still technically part of the 13th infantry, it is likely the decision to transfer that unit to the 15th had already been made and they were not involved in the battle at San Luis Pass.

On April 16, 1862, the "Field and Staff" plus the new Company E of the 15th Texas Infantry were stationed at Camp Speight near Millican, Brazos County, Texas. They may have been there already for some time as the funding to transport them there was approved the previous year. There was another Company E of the 15th already in existence; it is likely that the two companies were combined although one source refers to those who transferred from the 13th Infantry as "the new Company E." They were joined by other companies of the 15th Infantry over the next few weeks. Other regiments also had camps near Millican.

A soldier in a different unit that arrived in Millican in November 1862 described it this way in his journal:

1862: Nov. 8 -- Colonel James REILY's Regiment of Texas Mounted Volunteers -- We started early this morning and reached Millican in due season and from there we soon reached our regimental camp on a little slope towards the south in the midst of the post oaks -- Millican is a thriving looking little town with a R R depot two hotels and three livery stables and two or three barrooms and as many stores. We found out very soon after we got to camp that there is very little grass anywhere around here and as a matter of course we regret it most of our horses being grass raised animals. We camped about where SPAIGHT's Regiment camped while we were in New Mexico. The remains of their old camp are plentiful horse troughs tables rudely made of puncheons laid across poles supported by forks driven firmly into the ground ... From Journal of A.B. PETICOLAS, vol.3, Local History Collection, Victoria College, Victoria, Texas, copy supplied by Don E. ALBERTS.

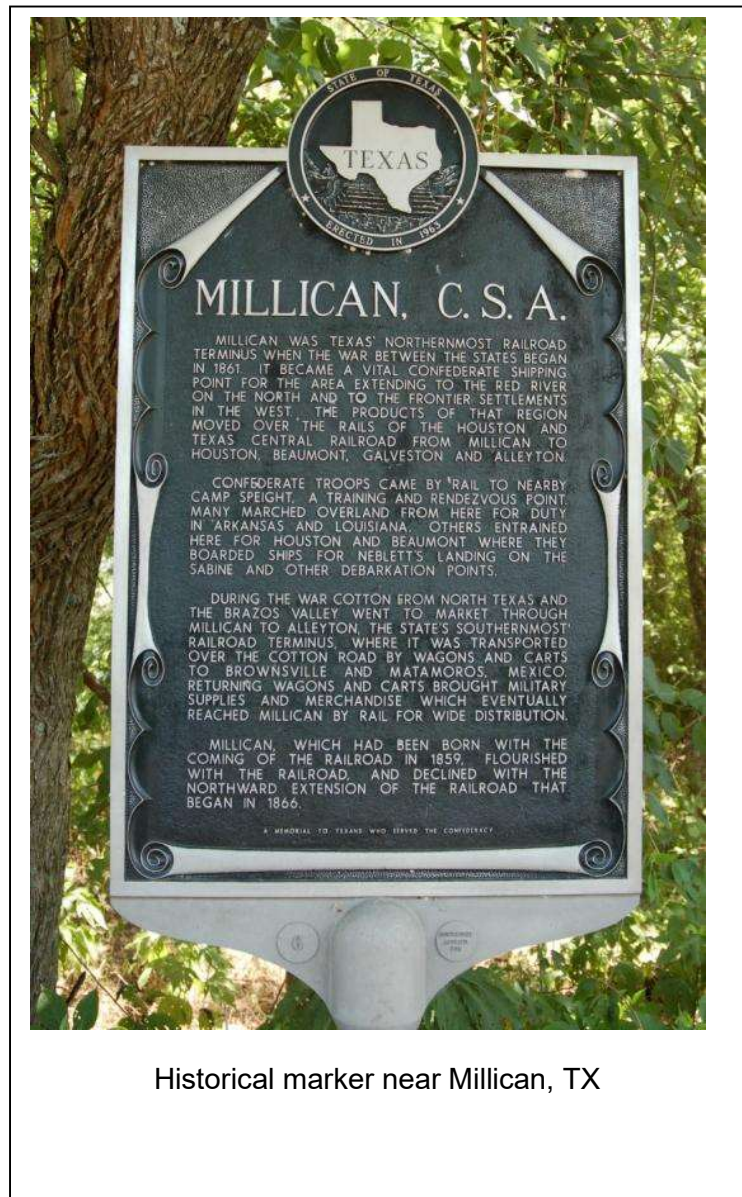
At the time of the civil war, Millican was the northern terminus of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad and was reported to be the largest city north of Houston and Galveston. During the civil war it became the training site for 5000 confederate troops. In this era, it was a prosperous city that built churches and schools and is thought to have had a population of about 3000. Following the war, the railroad was extended north, making Millican a less important center. This and other problems following the war led to its decline. The population in the 2000 census was 108.

The Fifteenth Infantry drilled at Fort Speight throughout the summer before marching to Arkansas in the fall. The regiment spent a brief time with Randle's Brigade in the fall of 1862 before joining General Thomas Hindman's Army in Western Arkansas in December 1862.

The confederates had suffered a major defeat in March 1862 at the Battle of Pea Ridge. Following that battle, General Earl Van Dorn led his army out of Arkansas, leaving only a small number of troops at Fort Smith. General Thomas Hindman was assigned the task of building a new army. This army became the Trans-Mississippi Department and Fort Smith was the center of his operations. Massive camps built up and the storehouses of the fort provided uniforms, arms and provisions to Hindman's army. Unfortunately, the supplies were not sufficient and many men suffered and died from hunger, cold and disease.

Elijah Meador, Clement's son, died of disease on October 13, 1862. A. J. Meador whose relationship is not known, died on the same day but the cause of death was not recorded. Thirteen family members signed on with the 13th Texas infantry; less than a year after their enlistment and barely six months into active military duty, their number was now down to seven.

General Hindman's army had suffered significant losses in the Battle of Prairie Grove in northwestern Arkansas on December 7, 1862. The battle was considered a draw but both sides suffered many casualties and wounded. Hindman returned to Fort Smith after the battle. The fifteenth infantry was probably not involved in the Battle of Pine Grove.



Historical marker near Millican, TX

Colonel Speight received the command of a brigade that also included four dismounted Texas cavalry regiments in January 1863. Lt. Col. James E. Harrison assumed the command of the 15th Texas Infantry. In February, Harrison led them on a march through the snow from Fort Smith to the Red River. The Red River is the northern border between Texas and Oklahoma and Arkansas. They probably stayed in or near Arkansas.

In April they were ordered to Louisiana and to the command of General Richard Taylor. The 15th Texas Infantry and one other unit moved to the Mississippi River where they harassed Union outposts and shipping. On September 29, 1863 under the command of Major John W. Daniel, the 15th Texas led an attack against a Federal force at Stirling's Plantation near Fordoche Bridge, LA, resulting in a Confederate victory.



In October, the 15th Texas under Lt. Colonel Harrison became part of Polignac's Brigade. On November 3 General Thomas Green led cavalry and infantry, including the 15th Texas, in a surprise attack that drove back Union troops on Bayou Bourbeau. Although a Confederate victory, the battle took a toll on the soldiers from Navarro County, with 7 killed in action, 22 wounded and 5 missing.

In February and March 1864 engaged in skirmishes with Union forces at Vidalia and Harrisonburg, LA. They then rejoined Taylor for the Red River Campaign.

By April, 1864, Major General Nathaniel Bank's Union Forces had advanced about 150 miles up the Red River. Major General Richard Taylor, with no instructions from his commander, decided to try to stem the Union drive. He established a position near Sabine Crossroads near Mansfield. On April 8, 1864, Bank's men approach and drove back the Confederate Cavalry and, for the rest of the morning, probed the confederate lines. In the afternoon, Taylor decided to attack even though he was outnumbered. He attacked both flanks of the Union Army but they were stopped after about an hour's fight. Banks withdrew but met Taylor the next day and Taylor prevailed, forcing Banks and his Union forces to retreat to Pleasant Hill.

Taylor thought the Yankees would be timid following the loss at Mansfield so he marched his forces to Pleasant Hill in the hopes of finishing off the Union forces. The Confederates closed in and then rested for a few hours. At 5:00 pm they attacked. The greatly outnumbered Confederate forces were no match for the Union Army in this battle and were forced to retreat. This was the last major battle, in terms of number of soldiers engaged, in the Louisiana phase of the Red River Campaign. Although Banks won the battle, he retreated wanting to get his army out of Louisiana before he suffered any further losses and he chose to abandon his objective of capturing Shreveport.



Historical Marker Near Mansfield, LA

The brigade, including the 15th Texas continued to harass Bank's army as they retreated down the Red River. The Federal forces reached the Atchafalaya River on May 17. Crossing the river would allow them to be shielded from the continuous harassment by the Confederate forces but he had to wait until the army engineers constructed a bridge.

On May 18, Banks learned that Taylor's force was near Yellow Bayou so he ordered Brigadier General A.J. Smith to stop them. Since Smith could not comply himself, he ordered Brigadier General Joseph A. Mower to meet Taylor. The Yankees attacked but the Confederates counterattacked forcing the Union forces back. This see-saw action continued for several hours until the ground cover caught fire forcing both sides to retire. The Union forces won the battle but left the area following this final battle of the Red River Campaign.



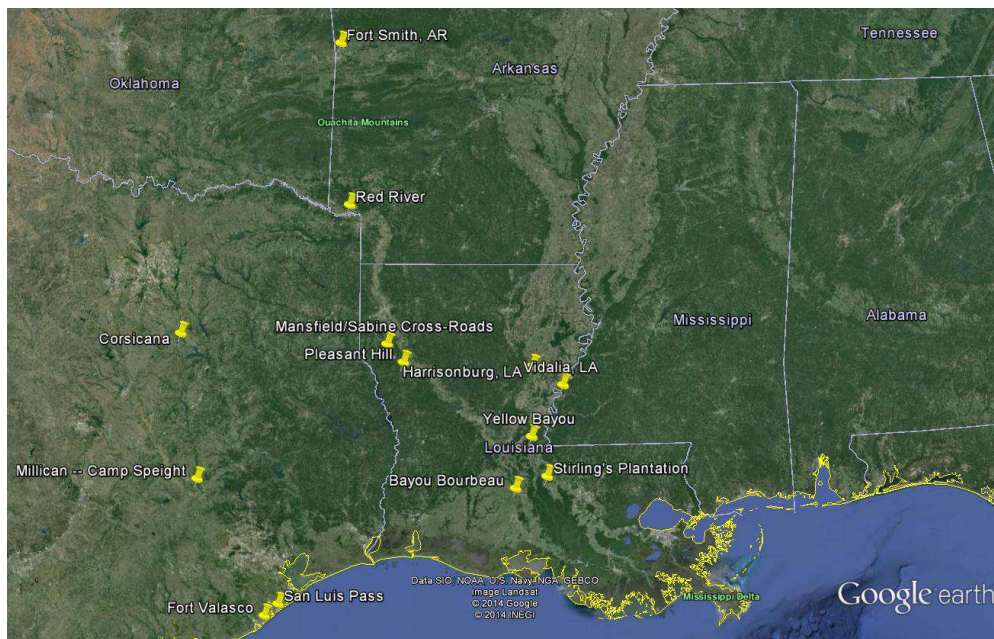
After a summer attempt to cross the Mississippi River failed, the brigade moved to Arkansas in the fall. In November the 15th Texas returned to Louisiana where it remained through February 1865. The men of Companies E and G of the 15th Texas Infantry started their journey back to Navarro County on February 20, 1865. Then in

March the regiment moved into its home state where it disbanded in May and the troops were discharged later that spring.

The Federal occupation forces reached Texas on June 10, 1865. Corsicana was occupied by Federal troops as were all county seats in the South. The troops camped at the corner of courthouse square. Some of the soldiers were former slaves which made the loss of the war even harder to accept for many of the Navarro county citizens. Fortunately, the officer in charge of the occupying troops, Lt. Adan Romanza Chaffee was skilled at relating the local citizenry with tact and was a power of conciliation. Chaffee was an Ohio man who had served four years in the war and was a hero of many campaigns.

The occupation, which lasted until 1872, was relatively peaceful in Navarro County. There was a Ku Klux Klan in the area but racial tensions were not significant and no significant issues were recorded. Some former slaves stayed with former masters and some hired on with other farmers. Some Navarro County citizens helped the former slaves establish a church and build a building.

The soldiers from the Meador and Melton families returned to their pre-war occupations. Texas was readmitted to the Union on March 30, 1870, the last state in the Confederacy to return.





“A Call to Arms”
Civil War Memorial in Courthouse Square, Corsicana, Texas

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