

1821

A HISTORY OF THE TERRITORY THAT NOW CONSTITUTES  
WALLER COUNTY, TEXAS, FROM  
1821 TO 1884

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
the University of Texas in Partial Fulfill-  
ment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Frank Edd White, B. A.

(Waller, Texas)

Austin, Texas

August, 1936



49  
out of the Jessie Clary Survey. There are records of

---

49  
Waller County Dead Records, Hempstead V, 436.

---

other donations for church sites, but we are not sure about how many buildings were erected on these sites. However, this indicates that there was considerable organization activity among the various religious denominations in the twenty-five years following the Civil War. These deed records cited cannot be taken as conclusive evidence in regard to the dates that various churches were organized, because there evidently were some who did not own the sites where their buildings stood, and in some instances several denominations used the same building.

There is one institution in Waller county that deserves special mention; that is Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College for Negroes. The story of this college is the story of the rise of the Texas negro from the status of a slave to that of an educated and useful citizen. Prior to the emancipation of the slaves the site upon which Prairie View now stands was the slave plantation of Colonel Jared Ellison Kirby, who was a cousin of Leonard



Waller Croce, the owner of Liendo plantation. The Kirby estate then bore the Spanish name Alta Vista.

After Colonel Kirby's death, soon after the Civil War, his widow, Mrs. Helen Marr Kirby, afterward dean of women at Texas University, turned the plantation mansion into a fashionable school for young ladies. <sup>50</sup> The school was not

---

<sup>50</sup> Mrs. Fannie Quinn of Waller attended this private school conducted by Mrs. Kirby and she praises her very highly for the type of work that she did at Alta Vista.

---

a financial success and Mrs. Kirby sold the plantation to the State of Texas. The college was later built on the plantation site.

August 14, 1876, an act was passed by the Fifteenth Legislature of Texas establishing the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas for the benefit of colored youth. <sup>51</sup> The Kirby Plantation was purchased and the

---

<sup>51</sup> Gammel's Laws of Texas, VIII, 972.

---

Spanish Alta Vista was changed to the English Prairie View. The Kirby mansion became Kirby Hall, and only



recently was it torn down.

The school was organized by those at the head of Agricultural and Mechanical College at College Station near Bryan, Texas, but the name (Agricultural and Mechanical College) sounded too much like work to the newly freed negroes and they refused to attend on the ground that they did not need to be trained to work, and the school soon failed for want of students. As a result

---

53

The Houston Informer and Texas Freeman (Houston) April 19, 1931, p. 9.

---

the school was reorganized in 1879 into a school whose purpose, primarily, was to train teachers. It has con-

---

53

Gamsel, Laws of Texas, VIII, 1481.

---

tinued to grow and prosper under this reorganization.

The Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College was recognized as a land grant college under the second Morrill act of 1890, and it is now the largest land grant college for negroes in the world. Although its name was changed, it is one of the best industrial schools for



negroes anywhere, and educators from many sections of the world visit and inspect the work being done there. <sup>54</sup> It

---

<sup>54</sup> Principal Banks of the College says that there were three people from Africa doing work on the campus in 1935.

---

is the only state-supported institution for higher education of negroes in Texas. The institution boasts of over thirty-five thousand graduates and ex-students who are leaders in various occupations and professions in their communities.

##### 5. Edmund Montgomery and Elisabet Ney

A paper on Waller county could not do justice to that section without briefly sketching the lives of Dr. Edmund Montgomery, the scientist and philosopher, and his wife, Elisabet Ney, the famous Texas sculptress. They purchased the already famous Liendo, the former home of Colonel Leonard Waller Groce, March 4, 1873, the same year that Waller county was created. They were not natives of Waller county, or of America for that matter, but the results of their work are known in many countries. Perhaps the people of Waller county have never appreciated and understood these people and their work as they should. Dr. Montgomery spent the