



# TARRANT COUNTY TXGENWEB

Barbara Knox and Rob Yoder, County Coordinators

Copyright © 2011. All rights reserved.

## Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

### William Henry Cowan

Compiled by Michael Patterson  
Copyright © 2011. All rights reserved.

William Henry Cowan was a Tennessee native who served in a Union cavalry regiment raised near his home in 1864. By 1880 he had settled near Grapevine in Tarrant County. He later moved to Denton County where he died and was buried in present-day Westlake, Texas in 1910.

Many of Mr. Cowan's descendants have placed material at [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com). He was born in Marion County, Tennessee on October 7, 1832, and was a son of William Cowan, Sr. and Cynthia (Morgan) Cowan, both of whom died in Marion County. William Cowan Sr.'s name appears on the 1836 tax list there.

When the 1850 census was taken, William Jr. was nineteen years old and was living with his parents and siblings in the third civil district of Marion County. They were farming his father's property, which was valued at one thousand dollars.

William Cowan was married in Marion County on Christmas Eve in 1852 to Sarah Caroline Grayson. Sarah was born January 24, 1834 in Marion County to William Henry Grayson (1799-1879) and his wife, Nancy (Hixson) Grayson (1799-1881). They both died in Marion County.

William and Sarah and their family lived in Marion County's Third District in 1860 in the area served by the post office at Lowrey's Creek. William was farming his own land which was valued at one thousand two hundred dollars. He owned personal property worth three hundred dollars. They had only two children with them: William H and Samuel H. Cowan, along with thirteen-year-old Margaret Grayson.

Mr. Cowan served in the Union Army during the Civil War. His compiled military service file in the National Archives contains two original signed copies of his enlistment paper. He enlisted in Co. C, 6th Tennessee Mounted Infantry at Jasper, Marion County, Tennessee on September 7, 1864 for a term of one year. He was a native of Marion County, was thirty-four years old, and had gray

eyes, black hair, and a dark complexion; he was five feet nine inches tall. He was mustered into the service at Chattanooga, Tennessee on October 23, 1864. He was appointed to the rank of first sergeant on May 20, 1865, and was mustered out at Nashville, Tennessee on June 30. No other records of his service are to be found in his file in Washington, D. C.

A short history of the 6<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Mounted Infantry as found online is as follows: ***“The report of Adjutant General J. P. Brownlow, State of Tennessee, states this regiment was employed by Major General James B. Steedman, Commanding District of the Etowah, with headquarters at Chattanooga, in scouting the Cumberland Mountains in Tennessee and North Georgia after the numerous guerrilla bands which infested the region.***

***“The first mention of the regiment in the Official Records was dated November 30, 1864, at the time when General Steedman, with the major portion of his command, was preparing to join Major General George H. Thomas for the defense of Nashville against General Hood's invasion. On this date, Lieutenant Colonel Gowin was ordered to send 130 men at daybreak on December 1 to Cleveland, Tennessee, where they were to report to Colonel Boughton, commanding the post. No further mention of the regiment was found until January 21, 1865, when General Steedman, back at Chattanooga, reported he had sent Gowin's 6th Tennessee Mounted Infantry toward Summerville, Georgia, via LaFayette. On February 2, at Ringgold, Georgia, Colonel Gowin reported the previous night he had attacked the guerrilla leader, Gatewood, with 75 men in McLemore's Cove, killing 14, and routing the remainder with the loss of most of their horses and arms.***

***“On March 11, 1865, the regiment was directed to report, by letter, to Major General Steedman, Commanding District of the Etowah. In April, 80 men, under Major Bean, were reported as part of an expedition to Dalton and Spring Place, Georgia, and to the Coosawattie River, lasting from April 1-4, in the course of which there were several skirmishes with guerrillas. Brownlow's report states the regiment was placed under Brigadier General H. M. Judah, Commanding 1st Brigade, 2nd Division, with headquarters at Decatur, Georgia, about the last of March, where it was employed in scouting until the surrender of the Confederate army at Greensboro, North Carolina, and then moved to Resaca, Georgia, where its men were employed as couriers along the railroad to Atlanta. On June 18, 1865, the regiment was ordered to Nashville, and was mustered out June 30, 1865.”***

In 1870 the family still lived in Marion County's 3<sup>rd</sup> District, where William worked as a dry goods merchant; he owned real estate worth one thousand five hundred dollars and personal property worth one thousand one hundred thirty dollars. Mr. and Mrs. Cowan had three children with them: William, Samuel, and Alice J. Cowan. Margaret Grayson was still with them as well.

In October of 1878 William Cowan left Tennessee and came to northeast Tarrant County to locate a new home for his family. His older brother, Seabird Cowan, lived in the White's Chapel Community on a farm owned by Stephen Blevins Austin. William chose this area for his family's new start. In November Mrs. Cowan and her five children came to Texas by train. Nearly seventy years later one of them, Alice, wrote down her remembrances of the trip. After selling most of their household furniture they packed the rest, including four feather beds, in large boxes and trunks.

They cooked and packed enough food for four days. Two young men seeking their fortunes in Texas accompanied the Cowans, making a party of eight people.

On the first day they boarded the train at Whitwell, Tennessee and rode to Bridgeport, Alabama, where they waited several hours to cross the Tennessee River on a ferry. The train coach was cold and was heated only by a wood stove in the corner. The second and third days were spent passing through Tennessee and Mississippi. There was a long delay waiting for the large ferry boat which took them across the Mississippi River, and little Hixon Cowan spent his time running up and down the tracks with his sister Alice chasing him. About dark the train was ferried across the river and by morning was in Little Rock, Arkansas. That evening they reached Dallas, Texas. Most of the boiled ham, bread, and chicken were gone by then. The young men foraged for food around the stations whenever the train stopped.

Between Dallas and Fort Worth a Texas blue norther hit and the cold wind howled though the train coach. The wood stove did little to ease the travelers' misery. They were all happy to see their father who met them at the station in Fort Worth. They piled into a covered wagon and drove up muddy Main Street to the McBride Wagon Yard near the court house. They slept on blankets in a cold room or shed which was a part of the wagon yard property.

The next morning they left Fort Worth and stopped at Fossil Creek at Birdville to eat lunch and to let the team rest. A second wagon with them held all their belongings which had come with them as baggage on the train. After dark they reached the Blev Austin home at White's Chapel. Austin was a kinsman in some way, and the whole family was welcomed in and were soon bedded down and sleeping on the floor.

Seabird Cowan's home was their next destination. He had a large family and a small house. Within a few days William and his family moved into a one-room log house about sixteen feet square with two doors, one window, and a large fireplace on one end. For a kitchen there was a twelve-by-twelve log room with a dirt floor about thirty feet from the house. It was used for cooking and storage.

There was no water at the house. They hauled water on a sled in barrels from a ground tank one-quarter mile away. After buying three cows, some hogs and chickens, the struggle for life in a new place began. Mr. Cowan bought some cotton seed for fifty cents per ton to feed his cows. When his hogs ate it they died.. In the spring of 1879 Anise Grayson, Sam Cowan, and Jim Ealy dug a well in the yard of the house and found water at thirty feet. The family used a windlass and bucket to raise the water. They still took their clothing to the ground tank (pond) to wash it.

Mr. Cowan bought three horses, and they put in crops of cotton and corn on Blev Austin's land. After the harvest Anise and Jim went west to work as farm hands for ten dollars per month and board. Sam Cowan took an oral examination and got a job teaching at the Walnut Grove school on Denton Creek north of White's Chapel. The Cowans' small children went to school in the church building at White's Chapel and were taught by Seabird Cowan.

In the spring of 1880 another large cotton crop was planted and it appeared to be doing fine...promising to yield a bale per acre. An untimely frost came, and what should have been a fifty-bale yield ended up being only four bales.

By the time the census was taken in 1880, the Cowans had settled in northeast Tarrant County in Precinct 3, north of Big Bear Creek. The names of their closest neighbors in the census indicate they lived in the White's Chapel area of present-day Southlake. Five children were with them: Samuel H., Alice J., David H., Ida M., and Clinton A. Cowan. Also with them was nineteen-year-old Henry Grayson, a native of Tennessee.

The agricultural census shows that William Cowan was a sharecropper working on eighty acres of cultivated land in 1880. He estimated the value of the farm at eight hundred dollars. He owned farm equipment worth one hundred dollars and livestock worth one hundred fifty dollars. He estimated the value of all his farm production for 1879 at four hundred fifty dollars. He owned three horses, one mule, two milk cows, and three cattle of other classes. Two calves had been dropped on his land in the past year. He estimated he had produced one hundred pounds of butter in 1879. He owned eighteen hogs and thirty chickens. He estimated his hens had laid one hundred dozen eggs in the past year. His twenty-five acres of Indian corn had produced two hundred fifty bushels of corn, and his twenty acres of cotton had made six bales. He had one-quarter of an acre in sweet potatoes which had produced twenty-five bushels. He had cut fifty cords of wood off the place in the past year, worth one dollar per cord.

William H. Cowan's older brother, Seabird Cowan (1824-1883), also lived in the White's Chapel area of present-day Southlake, Texas at the time the 1880 census was taken. At some point another brother, Joseph S. Cowan (1848-1905), also came here and lies buried in the same cemetery as William H. Cowan at Westlake, Texas.

In the fall of 1881 William Cowan, his wife, and children moved to the Jarvis farm four miles west of Keller on the prairie. There they had a four-room plank house with a plank kitchen in the yard. By now they had seven cows purchased with money they had received from Mrs. Cowan's father's estate in Tennessee. With the help of a hired man, Jim Eaves, they planted a big cotton patch. The year 1881 was dry and the crops that year were failures. The family gathered small heads of cabbage and stalks and boiled them with bacon skins for food. At this time the children attended school at Boone's Point. Their teacher was Will Nail who had recently arrived from Sequatchie College at Pikeville, Tennessee.

A while later William Cowan bought a forty-acre farm in the Cross Timbers using four hundred dollars from Mrs. Cowan's mother's estate. This place had a log house eighteen feet square with two shuttered windows, a plank side room for a kitchen and a small bedroom at the end. By now they had ten head of cattle, three horses, and several hogs. This place had a running stream fed by a spring of good water. While there the children attended Sam's School, which was well known for its competent teachers.

Alice Cowan's narrative gives many details of the later lives of her siblings and their families. She relates one incident when her brother's suit of clean clothes was sprayed by a skunk. Her mother put

the suit in the yard and covered it with dirt and leaves for a day, trying to remove some of the smell. It worked to a degree.

On August 5, 1890 William Cowan filed an application for a pension based upon his service in the Union Army. It was approved. In 1907 he applied for additional benefits based upon his age. Sarah C. Cowan received a Union widow's pension after his death. The high cost of obtaining copies of the Union pension files made it impossible to utilize them in this project.

Mr. Cowan remained in northeast Tarrant County as late as December 1895. His home appears on Sam Street's Map of that date, and was located about two and one-half miles southeast of Roanoke. It was located in the northwest corner of the William H. Martin survey in present-day Westlake. In modern-day terms it sat along the east side of Precinct Line Road a few yards southeast of the eastern end of Vaquero Club Drive.

He was appointed postmaster of Roanoke, Texas on April 9, 1898. In 1902 he instituted the first rural route for mail delivery at Roanoke. His daughter, Ida L. Cowan, succeeded him on April 14, 1910, and served until 1946.

When the 1900 census was taken in Precinct 4 of Denton County, Texas Mr. and Mrs. Cowan had their two daughters, Alice and Ida, living with them. Both were working as school teachers. Mr. Cowan was the postmaster.

The census taker in 1910 found Mr. and Mrs. Cowan and their daughter, Ida, living in the same place. Mr. Cowan was retired, and Ida was working as the postmistress. Mrs. Cowan said she had given birth to seven children, six of whom were still living. Mr. Cowan verified that he was a Union veteran.

William H. Cowan died at Roanoke, Denton County, Texas at 8 a.m. on November 4, 1910. The informant on the death certificate was his daughter, Ida. He died of senility. He was buried in the IOOF Cemetery south of town. It is now within the city limits of Westlake, Texas.

Mrs. Sarah C. Cowan died November 17, 1925. She was buried beside her husband. Both have upright engraved granite headstones.

The following short accounts of the lives of the Cowan's seven children were written from family records placed on the internet, from Texas vital statistics records, census records, and headstone records. Alice Lewis's account gives many details of their later lives. It is in the hands of her granddaughter in Nocona, Texas.

William Henry Cowan was born October 31, 1853. He was working as a clerk in his father's dry goods store in 1870 in District 3 of Marion County, Tennessee. Descendants say he married Elizabeth Hudson in 1873. In 1880 he and his wife lived in Breckenridge, Stephens County, Texas, where he worked as a real estate agent. He lived a remarkable life in many different places. He died in California on January 19, 1934.

Samuel Houston Cowan was born December 15, 1858. He married Anna Schoolfield (1860-1936) in Galveston, Texas on April 24, 1882. Descendants say he died July 20, 1958 in Fort Worth, and was buried in the IOOF Cemetery in Roanoke.

James S. Cowan was born April 23, 1862. He died November 12, 1864 in Tennessee and lies buried there.

Alice Jane Cowan was born July 2, 1867. She married William Burton Lewis (1853-1932). She died in the Major Clinic Hospital at Nocona, Montague County, Texas at 5:10 p. m on August 1, 1964. Her last home was in Nocona. She was buried in Nocona Cemetery.

David Hixon Cowan (shown on his death certificate as Hixon David) was born February 20, 1871. He was a veteran of the Spanish-American War. He married Iola Lucretia Anderson (1876-1960) in Denton County on June 23, 1902. He spent many years of his life working for the railroads. He died in the Gulf, Colorado, and Sante Fe Hospital in Temple, Bell County, Texas at 2:05 p. m. on May 15, 1955. His last permanent address was 803 South Fifth Street in Temple. He was buried in Hillcrest Cemetery in Temple, Texas.

Ida Lee Cowan was born October 4, 1874. She succeeded her father as postmaster at Roanoke, Texas, and served thirty-six years in that post. She died in Flow Memorial Hospital in Denton at 10 p.m. on January 30, 1971. She was buried in the IOOF Cemetery at Roanoke on February 1.

Clinton Anderson Cowan was born August 17, 1876. He was a member of the Masonic lodge. His first wife was Gertrude E. Treece (1880-1913), whom he married about 1898. He was next married to Laura Katherine Phelps. His last wife was Bessie Roxie Harris (1885-1951). He died August 2, 1964 and was buried in the IOOF Cemetery in present-day Westlake, Denton County, Texas.





VOLUNTEER ENLISTMENT.



STATE OF Tennessee TOWN OF Gasper

I, William Cowan born in Marion County  
in the State of Tennessee aged Thirty four years,  
and by occupation a Farmer Do HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE to have  
volunteered this Seventh day of Sept 1864,

to serve as a Soldier in the Army of the United States of America, for the period of  
Three YEARS, unless sooner discharged by proper authority: Do also agree to accept such  
bounty, pay, rations, and clothing, as are, or may be established by law for volunteers. And I,

William Cowan do solemnly swear, that I will bear true faith and  
allegiance to the United States of America, and that I will serve them honestly  
and faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whomsoever; and that I will observe and obey  
the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me,  
according to the Rules and Articles of War.

Seen and subscribed to, at Gasper Tenn } William Cowan  
this 7th day of Sept 1864. }  
By Ed Gowin  
Recruiting Officer

I CERTIFY, ON HONOR, That I have carefully examined the above named volunteer, agreeably to  
the General Regulations of the Army, and that in my opinion he is free from all bodily defects and mental  
infirmary, which would in any way disqualify him from performing the duties of a soldier.

W. D. Hester  
Examining Surgeon.

I CERTIFY, ON HONOR, That I have minutely inspected the volunteer, W. Cowan  
previously to his enlistment, and that he was entirely sober when enlisted; that to the best of my judgment  
and belief, he is of lawful age; and that, in accepting him as duly qualified to perform the duties of an able-  
bodied soldier, I have strictly observed the Regulations which govern the recruiting service. This soldier has  
Gray eye, Black leg, Back complexion, is 5 feet 9 inches high.

Ed Gowin  
Recruiting Officer  
6th Regiment of Tennessee Vol. Volunteers.

Numbered into the service of the 6th Regt. for one year or longer to me, from date of enlistment, Co. B.  
6th Regt. Tennessee Vol. Inf. Col. on the 2nd day of October 1864 at Chattanooga, Tenn.

Sept 10th 1864  
W. D. Hester

DECLARATION OF RECRUIT

I, *William Cowan Jr* desiring to VOLUNTEER as a Soldier in the Army of the United States, for the term of *one* ~~FIFTEEN~~ YEARS, Do DECLARE, That I am, *34*, *Thirty four* years and *one* months of age; that I have never been discharged from the United States service on account of debility or by sentence of court-martial, or by order before the expiration of a term of enlistment; and I know of no impediment to my serving honestly and faithfully as a soldier for *three* years.

GIVEN at *Jasper Tenn* this The *12<sup>th</sup>* day of *September*  
Witness: *Edgar* *William*

No. *6*  
*William Cowan Jr*  
Volunteered at *Jasper Tenn*  
*September 12<sup>th</sup>* 1864  
By *Wm. Cowan*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Regt of Artillery Tenn*  
enlistment; last served in Company ( )  
Reg't of  
Filed in your subordinate Div. H. & I. 1864  
Discharged  
*Edgar*  
*Wm*

CONSENT IN CASE OF MINOR.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ Do CERTIFY, That I am the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_; that the said \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ years of age; and I do hereby give my CONSENT to his volunteering as a SOLDIER in the ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES for the period of THREE YEARS.

GIVEN at \_\_\_\_\_ The \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_  
Witness: \_\_\_\_\_