



TARRANT COUNTY TXGENWEB

Barbara Knox and Rob Yoder, County Coordinators

Copyright © 2010. All rights reserved.

Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

Benjamin Franklin Dickson

Compiled by Michael Patterson
Copyright © 2010. All rights reserved.

Benjamin Franklin Dickson, a native of Indiana, came to Texas a year after statehood with his parents. He was a Confederate veteran of a Texas cavalry regiment. He later left Tarrant County and died in March of 1885 in Titus County, Texas. A descendant, Hilma Ardito, has graciously shared her records with us.

Benjamin Franklin Dickson was born about 1834 in Clay County, Indiana. He was a son of James C. Dickson (born about 1798 in North Carolina) and his first wife. After having a number of children, the Dicksons left North Carolina and moved to Perry, Clay County, Indiana about 1833. After his wife died, James C. Dickson was remarried to Elizabeth Jones Chadwell, the widow of George Chadwell. The family moved to Cooke County, Texas in 1846.

Benjamin F. Dickson and his family are mentioned in one the premier local history works on Cooke County, Texas, the memoirs of William R. Strong (1833-1916), who settled in Cooke County with his parents and siblings in 1846 at the same time the Dicksons arrived. Mr. Strong's reminiscences are an unparalleled look at frontier life in north Texas. They are available online at <http://waresofwoodbine.envy.nu/wrstrong.html> Strong sometimes referred to Benjamin as "Beef" Dickson, and named his commanding officer during his Confederate service.

Luckily for Dickson researchers, Mr. Strong's family and the Dickson family met as a part of a wagon train on its way to Texas, so we have an excellent account of the last part of the trip. Among other things, Mr. Strong wrote: *"...When we got to Arkansas we found two roads, one across the mountains and one east of the mountains going down Frog Bayou and Little Frog Bayou [near Mulberry, Arkansas]. I have since heard that this was changed to Mulberry and Little Mulberry. Little Frog Bayou was the crookedest stream I ever saw. By the time we got to Arkansas our crowd was a regular caravan. Dixons and Chadwells, Chowley and the two Sutherlands, and others had joined us. One man had four yoke of oxen hitched to his wagon and lots of times the head oxen would be crossing Little Frog Bayou in one place and the wagon wheels would be in the same*

stream in another place. That day we crossed that stream thirty-five times. It set in to raining and Big Frog Bayou got up so we could not cross it and we had to stay up there a week. Here was where I first saw cotton. A man had planted some and it was just coming up. I thought it was buckwheat for when they first come up cotton and buckwheat have leaves nearly alike except cotton is about four times as big as buckwheat. This man had checked his cotton and that looked like a queer way to plant buckwheat to me. There was not a tent in the whole crowd and we camped just here and yon as fancy dictated. We did not have a leader or any order as we had to have in Texas when we hauled to the government posts. While we was camped at this place I got lost. There was a wide flat near the river where people pastured their stock. Roaming around one day I passed through it, came to a place where there was a house and a wheat field to the north and another one to the south. I got so mixed up every time I tried to go back the way I came that finally I found an old road and went to a house and asked a woman where it led to. She said to the gin. I asked if there was any other house or road to throw a body off the way in going. She said no, just go straight ahead and you won't see anything for about five miles when you will come to the gin. I followed the road through the brush till I came in sight of the gin when I struck a clearing and followed around the fence till I came to the big road which I followed till I got back to camp, when I told them I had been down to see the cotton gin."

"When we went to cross the Bayou everybody said they were willing to trying it but Henry Slack who was afraid it was too deep for his light wagon. So the men cut chunks and put on the bolsters and raised the bed up and took chains and ropes and tied the wagon bed so it could not float out of the standards but after all the trouble the water would not have come up into his wagon bed if it had been left alone."

"We crossed the Arkansas River at Van Buren. The country was mighty hard traveling. Rough, rocky, and sandy and all woods. When we got the boat to cross the river, there were no white men but three Negroes. One big slick buck Negro seemed to be the boss. He was cavorting around making lots of noise and splutter getting the flat boat loaded to his notion. He had loaded (James) Chambers wagons and our mare and cow on. The cow tried to go up the boat where the steers were and she bumped against this Negro. He turned around and hit her with an oar and knocked her horn off. When he did this she butted him into the river and then knocked Chambers into the river and ran our mare into the water also. The Negro rose up out of the water and yelled, 'See I popped up out of the water like a bad egg.' But he came on back and finished loading in a peaceable subdued manner and we did not have any more trouble."

"Fifteen miles beyond Van Buren we struck the Indian Territory. The first thing I recall after we got into Indian Territory was coming on a bunch of Indians playing ball. There was a big crowd. The bucks were playing ball and the squaws had long switches and black snake whips and were running after the men whipping them to make them play harder. The ball was a medium sized one and the struggle seemed to be to get the ball over a mark at either end of the field after starting in the center. When that was done the game was won and they would rest a while and have another game, with the squaws running and beating them all the time. They did not pay any attention to us, though there was a big lot of us. I think these were Choctaw Indians."

“We camped on Big Blue (River) in Indian Territory and that night lost a yoke of oxen. An Indian shanty stood nearby. Finally my father hired the Indian to help him find the oxen and it wasn’t no time till he drove them in. We had hunted ½ day for them and it looked like the Indian had hid them out so as to hold us up and get pay for finding them. Sixty years later I was working for a man and run across this spot and it looked so natural I recognized it and they told me it was the old emigrant road that crossed the Arkansas River at Van Buren and come on by Compton’s salt works across Big Blue, etc. to Texas.”

“We came on by Thompson’s salt works and the Boggy Depot, crossed the river at Colbert’s Ferry five miles above where Denison, Texas is now and so on to Uncle Bob Atchison’s and stopped there a few days and then on to Baker Branch this side of Whitesboro where we first stopped. We camped for a day at Uncle Bob Atchison’s place between Iron Ore and the river. Then came by old Sherman on the Denison and Dallas Road. At that time only one man, a cripple named Miller, lived there and sold barrels of whiskey. Did not kill any game. Passed lots of people coming and going. We met people going back from Texas who gave it an awful hard name. They would tell such things as all cattle died in Texas and you could not make a living and nothing would grow and they discouraged one man so that he turned around and went back. But we came on though we did not get our headright until a year after my father’s death...”

“...There were lots of game, deer, antelope, prairie chicken, wild turkeys, quail, and one year there were worlds of wild pigeons. They had a roost on the Chadwell and Dixon places, also one where Dave Gilbert now lives, and they would roost so thick on a limb they would break it off and got so thick they would nearly eat up the wheat crop...”

“...the first time I tried to dance, I had always been used to reels and had never seen a cotillion. Me, Ben Dixon, Thad Dixon, and Joe Clark was just kids, and four girls, Monday Sutherly, Hance Redmond, Kathrine Cook and one other, I forget her name, none of us had ever tried to dance. Old Mountain Jones was down at Monroe Dixon’s and he said “We will have a cotillion.” None of us had ever heard of one. We had never danced anything but we could have danced a reel all right. So he put me at the head of the set with Kathrine Clark, got us there and says, ‘All balance.’ I straightened up as plumb on my feet as I could. Then he says, ‘Balance all.’ So I straightened up more plumb still. Then he says, ‘Balance again,’ and I said ‘Balance, Hell. I am as balanced as I can get!’ Then he says, ‘Well I see you don’t know what a cotillion is, so we will just run if off into a reel.” Then we all went through all right. We were all just kids...”

“...In 1849 or ’50 a company of men from Tennessee came through here on an exploring expedition (Marcy’s Expedition), One man’s name was Taylor....after Taylor came through here along in the fall they got out here west and then decided they wanted a pilot. So they hired Ben Dixon to take them through. He had been out in the west with a ranger company. So he went with them as far as he knew anything about the country. He said it commenced to get cold weather and they took up winter quarters before he came back...”

“....the best times we had was at the barbecues. The first barbecue and dance I ever went to and the first one ever held in Cooke County was down on Elm where Him Dixon and Chadwell settled, on the Fourth of July, either 1847 or 1848, while Fitzhughes’ rangers were stationed there; and

people came to it from Grayson, Collin, and Denton as well as Cooke County. The soldiers got it up and furnished the mutton, beef, and pork that was barbecued. There was a big crowd of people. The soldiers had made a long arbor and cut the brush and scraped off the grass and smoothed the ground ready for the dancing. They danced all day and all night. From eight to ten couples danced at a time. They formed in two lines and the head couple would dance and swing each person on each side till they got to the foot..."

By 1850 Benjamin and his family were firmly settled in their new home. The census taker found him living in a mixed family headed by his father and stepmother. Benjamin was fifteen years old.

Benjamin married Ellen Benton on January 20, 1859, in Cooke County, Texas. Ellen was the daughter of Francis Marion Benton and Nancy Cooley. Ellen was born May 15, 1840 in Tennessee and died 1900. B. F. Dickson and his new wife, Ellen, were listed in the 1860 census of Cooke County in the area served by the post office at Gainesville. Living with them was William Bray, a twenty-year-old farmer and native of Missouri. Benjamin had real estate worth three thousand five hundred dollars, and personal property worth fifteen hundred dollars.

Mr. Dickson entered the Confederate service on July 17, 1862 at Gainesville, Texas. He became a second lieutenant in James D. Young's Company of the 1st Battalion of Texas Partisan Rangers. He was twenty-eight years old. He traveled thirty miles to the rendezvous, riding a horse worth one hundred sixty dollars and bringing equipment worth twenty-five dollars. He enlisted for a term of three years. This company subsequently became Company E, Martin's Texas Cavalry Regiment.

His file contains one letter of resignation dated February 19, 1863 at Camp B_____ in the Cherokee Nation. At some point during the first half of 1863 Lt. Dickson was under arrest. He was later promoted to first lieutenant, from which post he resigned on June 9, 1863. He was in camp at Sim's Bayou on May 8, 1865. No other records specifically mentioning his service have survived.

When the 1870 census was taken, the Dickson family was living in Precinct 2 of Tarrant County. Judging from the names of their neighbors, they probably lived in the Grapevine-Euless area. They had five children with them: J. M. and W. F. Dickson (sons who were eight years old), B. M. (a son who was five years old) S. E. (a girl three years old), and Perry (a son one year old). Information from some of the children's death certificates suggests they left Tarrant County and moved to Bosque County for a time during the 1870's.

By the time of the 1880 census, the Dicksons were living in Precinct 2 of Titus County, Texas. They had eleven children with them: James M., William F., Missouri, Sarah E., Robert Lee, Wesley, Noah, John, Holden, Minnie, and Mittie. Family sources say Benjamin Franklin Dickson died in March 1885 in Titus County. We have not discovered his burial site.

Information supplied by descendants, data from vital records and census records have been used to prepare the following list of the Dicksons' children.

James Marion Dickson and William Frank Dixon appear from the census records to have been twins. They were born about 1862.

Benjamin Missouri Dickson was born September 12, 1864, according to his death certificate. He died at Mount Vernon, Franklin County, Texas on January 16, 1929, and was buried in Friendship Cemetery in the old Friendship community in Franklin County.

Sarah Ellen Dickson was born about 1867, and her brother, Robert Lee Perry Dickson, was born about 1869.

Wesley Andrew Dickson was born December 6, 1871. He died December 16, 1941, at Ardmore, Oklahoma.

Noah Webster Dixon was born February 27, 1873 in Bosque County, Texas, according to his death certificate. He died at his home at 734 East Gossett Street in Gainesville, Texas on April 8, 1948. He was buried in Fairview Cemetery in Gainesville.

John Thomas Dixon was born about 1874.

Holder Thadiaz Dixon was born June 25, 1876 in Smith County, Texas, according to his death certificate. He died at Gainesville, Cooke County, Texas on October 5, 1943, and was buried in Fairview Cemetery in Gainesville.

Minnie Dixon and her twin sister, Mittie Dixon, were born about 1878. Some family sources say they were born September 20, 1880. These two girls were shown as two years old when the 1880 census taker arrived at their home on June 26, 1880. Mittie died January 23, 1952, in Los Angeles, California.