



Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society

Dawn Taylor, President

Wayne B. Anderson, Secretary

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N. Gay Blalock, Treasurer

Allen Terrell, Council-at-large

Wayne B. Anderson — Newsletter Editor

September 2017

Vol. 13, No. 9

Without a past, there is no future

Next meeting:

The next meeting will be **September 9, 2017, at 10:00 am at Camp Moore near Tangipahoa, LA.** Car pool/caravan drivers will meet at **Liberty Library at 9:00 am and depart for Camp Moore. A tour of Camp Moore will follow the meeting. See page 2 for a more definitive description of the location of Camp Moore.**

Future Meeting Schedule

Note: Time of regular meetings is 10:00 am unless otherwise specified.

September 9, 2017 — Regular monthly meeting. Location will be at Camp Moore.

October 14, 2017 — Regular monthly meeting. Location TBA.

November 11, 2017 — Regular monthly meeting. Location TBA.

December 2, 2017 — Open House at Amite County Courthouse, from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm.

January 13, 2018 — Regular monthly meeting. Location TBA.

February 10, 2018 — Regular monthly meeting. Location TBA.

March 10, 2018 — Regular monthly meeting. Location TBA.

April 14, 2018 — Regular monthly meeting. Location TBA.

May 5, 2017 — Heritage Day. Details TBA.

June 9, 2018 — Annual Meeting with election of officers. Regular monthly meeting. Location TBA.

AMITE COUNTY HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Minutes of the August 12, 2017 meeting

DRAFT

The meeting was held in the Little Red School House. President Dawn Taylor called the ACHGS business meeting to order at 10:15 am. There were 23 attendees present (based on a head count conducted by Secy. Anderson).

Sam King gave the invocation. Following the invocation, Mr. Kenneth Gordon, who has not been able to attend recently and who has eye difficulties, asked for everyone to identify themselves for his benefit.

The minutes of the June 10, 2017, meetings were considered for approval. Linda Lea made a motion to approve the minutes; Neil Randall seconded. The minutes were approved without dissent.

President Report: President Dawn Taylor had only one topic which was the final plan for the Ft. Mims field trip. The commitments to participate were insufficient to justify the cost of a bus so attendees may either car pool from Liberty or drive separately from their homes. Otherwise, the plan remains to leave on Friday, spend the night near Ft Mims (Dawn has the hotel details), and to return late on Saturday following the event.

Vice President Report: VP Barron was absent

Treasurer Report: Treasurer Gay Blalock reported that the society's bank balance was \$11,806.72.

Secretary Report: None.

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A motion was made by Nelson Dawson to accept the executive reports; Kay Berry seconded. The motion carried.

COMMITTEES: The only matter on the table was an announcement by Pres. Taylor that volunteers are needed for the Hospitality Committee which arranges for refreshments and other amenities for events such as Open House and Heritage Day..

Old Business: None.

New Business: None.

Other Business: None

Announcements:

The next meeting (September 9, 2017) will be held at Camp Moore prior to a tour of that site. Attendees may congregate at the Liberty Library and car pool/caravan to Camp Moore if they desire.

Sam King reported on the LRSH structural condition as determined from an inspection made in February by the Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History. As thought, the structure has deteriorated from water damage precipitated by the brick being of mid-19th century manufacture and not water repellent and by renovations made at various times which abrogated the moisture-removal venting of the original design. MDAH has given the report to specialists who may be able to recommend corrections to save the structure.

As there was no more society-specific business, the meeting was adjourned. The floor was given over to native of Amite County and author Jimmy Robertson who presented some observations on growing up in Amite County and discussed his several novels, one of which has just been published.

You may contact this editor at:
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Or by e-mail at sitemanager@achgs.org



September Meeting at Camp Moore

As stated on page one, the September meeting will be at Camp Moore located between Kentwood and Tangipahoa, Louisiana.

Directions: Go to Kentwood, take US 51 south 3.64 miles to LA 1052 which connects to Camp Moore Road, and proceed to the museum. Alternately, go to Tangipahoa, take US 51 north 0.65 miles to LA 1052, and proceed as previously described.

Participants with GPS navigation can enter the address: 70640 Camp Moore Rd, Kentwood, LA 70444 for destination tracking.

Contributions to Newsletter

Society members and other newsletter readers who have stories, family information, or other information that might be of interest relative to Amite County history or genealogy are encouraged to share through the newsletter. Contact this editor and I will send you the instructions for how to submit your contribution.

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BITS AND PIECES OF AMITE COUNTY HISTORY

DESCENDANTS OF REVEREND THOMAS MERCER

BEGIN PART 2. (SEE AUGUST NEWSLETTER FOR PART 1.)

1.5. **Eli Mercer** was born on 28 Jun 1780 in GA. He died on 7 Dec 1872 in Egypt, TX. Eli and his son Elijah Mercer were in the Battle of San Jacinto.

Article by Vernon P Crockett

MERCER,ELI (1790-1872) Eli Mercer, early settler, was born in Georgia on June 28, 1790. His father, Thomas Mercer, was a Baptist minister in Wilkes and Hancock Counties, Georgia, before 1803, when he moved his family to southwestern Mississippi. In Mississippi Eli Mercer married Ann Nancy Thompson on December 24, 1810. They became the parents of six children. Penelope, the oldest child married Gail Borden, Jr. [qv] In 1829, probably through the influence of Borden, whose brother, Thomas H, was already in Texas, Eli Mercer, his wife, their five unmarried children, and three slaves traveled by boat to Natchitoches, Louisiana, and then overland by wagon to the Colorado River in what is now Wharton County. In February 1832 Mercer bought 500 acres of the James W Jones League from Thomas H Borden for \$198. In 1837 he bought one quarter of the adjoining league from John P Borden. In the early years the area was known as Mercer's Crossing, because of the ferry that Eli Mercer operated there. Mercer's land on the Colorado became known as Egypt because of the abundance of corn produced there. Mercer was a delegate to the conventions of 1832 and 1833 from the District of Mina. At the 1832 convention he voted to petition the Mexican government to make Texas a separate state. In 1836 he was appointed one of the commissioners for organizing the militia for the jurisdiction of Austin. During the Texas Revolution he supplied the Texas army with beef and other provisions and hid corn in the cane brakes so that the community had food and seed when peace came and the settlers returned to their homes. When Texans fled before the approach of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna's army, Gail Borden borrowed a wagon and team from Mercer, and he and Joseph Baker hauled their press to Harrisburg, where, on April 14, an edition of the 'Telegraph and Texas Register' [qv] was being printed when the enemy arrived. The press was dumped into Buffalo Bayou, but some copies of the paper were saved. By February 1836 Thomas Rabb was organizing the men of the area into a company of 'Citizen Soldiers.' Eli Mercer joined on February 29 as a first sergeant. Both Mercer and his son Elijah participated in the battle of San Jacinto..

Mercer is said to have been the first producer of sugar in Texas. In the 'Telegraph and Texas Register' in November 1836, Borden praised the quality of sugar produced on the Mercer plantation. Eli Mercer served as postmaster at Mercer's from 1835 to 1837, by which time the town was called Egypt and was still part of Colorado County. He served again in 1841. In 1836 he was on the committee that selected Columbus as the county seat of Colorado County. He was elected justice of peace for the Lower District in the first Colorado County election in 1837 and served on the first jury in 1838. In 1838 Thomas J Robb, William J E Heard, and Mercer were appointed to receive subscriptions for the Colorado Navigation Company to promote the use of the river for transportation, and in September 1850 Mercer and others organized a new effort to remove the great raft in the Colorado that for so many years obstructed navigation on the lower river. Mercer was a longtime member of the Baptist State Convention, and when Baylor University was es-

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established at Independence in 1845, he was a charter trustee. He died in Egypt, Wharton County on Dec 7 1872. His exact burial site is unknown."

Bibliography: Sam Houston Dixon and Louis Wiltz Kemp, *The Heroes of San Jacinto* (Houston: Anson Jones, 1932). Louis Wiltz Kemp Papers, Texas state Archives, Austin. Annie Lee Williams, *A History of Wharton County* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones, 1964).

Mercer, Eli from the San Jacinto Museum of History, Houston, TX and San Jacinto Veterans web site: <http://www.sanjacinto-museum.org/kemp/v559.html>

Biography: **MERCER, ELI** --Born in Georgia June 28, 1790. He was a brother of the celebrated Jesse Mercer. He was married to Anna Thompson and to them were born the following children: Penelope, December 10, 1811; Reason, October 17, 1813; Levi, July 20, 1815; Elijah G, March 20, 1819; Teresa, February 21, 1822; and Lettelia, December 1, 1827.

Mr Mercer and his family moved to Amite County, Mississippi, and located on Pearl River.

[Amite River] There on September 28, 1828, his daughter Penelope was married to Gail Borden, Jr, who in later years invented a process for condensing milk (Mrs. Borden died in Galveston September 5, 1844). Mr Borden had moved to Mississippi from Indiana in 1825.

In the year 1829 Mr Mercer and family and Gail Borden, Jr and wife came to Texas and settled in Egypt in the present county of Wharton, where Gail Borden Sr and some of his sons had located a few years before. Mr Mercer received title to a league of land in Austin's Third Colony, December 13, 1830, situated in the present county of Jackson. On March 15, 1838, he received a Headright Certificate No 112 for a labor of land from the Colorado County Board of Land Commissioners, Egypt at that time being in Colorado County. In the Certificate it is simply stated that he arrived in Texas before May 2, 1835.

Mr Mercer was one of the delegates to the First Convention of Texas which convened at San Felipe de Austin October 1, 1832, from the district of Mina (not to be confused with the Mina-Bastrop-Municipality later created). He was also a delegate to the Second Convention of Texas held in San Felipe in 1833. At San Jacinto he was Orderly Sergeant in Captain William J E Heard's Company of 'Citizen Soldiers' and on November 20, 1838 he was issued Donation Certificate No 613 for 640 acres of land for having participated in the battle and Bounty Certificate No 4432 for 320 acres of land for having served in the army from February 29, to May 30, 1836.

Mr Mercer was one of the charter trustees of Baylor University, Independence, incorporated February 1, 1845.

Eli Mercer and Nancy (Anna) (Ann) Thompson were married abt 25 Dec 1810. Nancy (**Anna**) (**Ann**) **Thompson**, daughter of John Thompson and Priscilla Hale, was born on 23 Dec 1796 in S Carolina and died on 9 Jun 1855 in Egypt, TX. Eli Mercer and Nancy (Anna) (Ann) Thompson had the following children:

- 1.5.1. **Penelope Mercer** was born on 10 Dec 1811 in Amite Co, MS. She died on 5 Sep 1844 in Galveston, TX. **Penelope Mercer and Gail Borden Jr** were married on 18 Mar 1828 in Amite Co, MS.

Biography of Gail Borden.

Zion Hill academy was flourishing in 1829 and before. Gail Borden and Mr. Taylor were teachers in the school. Carl McIntire wrote in Clarion Ledger-Daily News, May 24, 1981 - . . . "If Gail Borden had been an educated man, there is no telling what he might have left for the world . . . Borden only attended school for a year and a half. However, that qualified him to be a school teacher in Mississippi and it was in this state that he found his health, established himself as a surveyor and got him a wife"

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After living in Liberty, in Amite County, for seven years, he went on to become a leading figure in Texas, publisher of one of its first newspapers, surveyor and map maker for much of its lands, friend of many of its famed leaders. He helped layout the city of Houston, helped develop the city of Galveston, became the inventor of the milk condensing process -and at his death was earning \$100,000, a year, a princely sum for the time.

Born Nov. 9, 1801 in Norwich, N. Y., he was the son of a farmer whose family dates back to 1637 in Massachusetts. On his mother's side he was related to Roger William, the founder of the Baptists in America.

Perhaps that was what allowed him another of his unusual distinctions . . . -the first person to be baptized in the Gulf of Mexico. He became a leader of the Baptists in Texas, helped to establish Baylor University and supported numerous poorly paid ministers.

The elder Bordens, with four sons, moved down the Ohio River in 1814 and settled in Kentucky, opposite Cincinnati, Ohio. This is the place Gail learned to be a surveyor, for it is claimed that he helped lay out the town of Covington, Ky.

Ten years later the family moved farther down the river into Indiana Territory at New London. It was here that Gail received his only formal schooling, attending classes for a year and a half By this time he had developed a cough, which was worse in cold weather, and while he was in New Orleans he met Dr. William Lattimore, a former Mississippi congressman, who had a home in Amite County.

During the spring or summer of 1822 he arrived at Liberty. He was 20 and had no money. His health, he felt, would not allow him to do survey work because it would be too demanding physically. Yet that was all he was really trained to do. He was too poor to farm, so he accepted a job as a school teacher.

He first taught at Bates School, in the Cold Springs community four miles north of Liberty. Later he would teach at Zion Hill a little farther north. But he was in Liberty on most weekends.

Some of those who attended his school related years later, how he would always run, never walk, from wherever he was staying. Two men said that when they were little fellows, he would run to their houses, hoist them on his shoulders, and run on to the school, carrying them all the way. It was a part of his health improvement program, which apparently worked.

There are rumors or legends, that while he was in Liberty he began his experiments with condensing milk. These have never been proven

As the years passed, his health improved and he became a surveyor, being appointed county surveyor shortly after his 24th birthday. For some unexplained reason he was officially known then as 'Captain' Borden, and he became a deputy federal surveyor in Liberty.

In 1828, Borden was married to Penelope Mercer, daughter of Eli Mercer whose father, Elder Thomas Mercer, had helped found the Mississippi Baptist Association.

For the wedding, Gail had to prove his financial responsibility and he did so by pledging \$200. In that same year he had purchased his own personal body servant, a man named Tom, and after the marriage he allowed Tom to choose a servant for Mrs. Borden, a girl whom Tom would marry

Just weeks after his marriage, Gail went to Texas, where some of his family had moved. he and his wife soon settled on Galveston Island

It was in Galveston that Borden began working again on his inventions. One was a portable bathhouse, another a machine that was to run on land or sea. Then there was a refrigerator to freeze the body of a yellow fever victim, to kill the fever. This he tried as a result of his wife's death from the dreaded disease.

..

He perfected his method for condensing milk and received a patent for it in 1856. After the death of his first wife, Penelope, Gail was married twice more. In 1845 he married Mrs Azuba Stearn in Galveston, but the marriage was dissolved in 1854. In 1860 he married Mrs. Emeline Eunice Church, who survived.

Children all by his first marriage, included John Gail, the youngest, who became the second president of the Borden Co., Henry Lee, who succeeded John Gail as president of the firm. There were two daughters, Philadelphia, who married Jehu W. Johnson, whose family founded The Houston Post and Mary Jane, who married a Connecticut farmer, Mills Munsill."

END OF PART 2

Annual Membership Contribution
Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society
PO Box 2
Liberty, MS 39645

Check or circle choice

- \$15.00 – Individual \$25.00 – Family \$50.00 – Sponsor or Ancestor Memorial
 \$200.00 – Lifetime \$150 -- Lifetime, couple 70+ age \$100 - Lifetime, 70+ individual
 \$10.00 – Student (under 18) \$10.00 – Senior (over 65)

All contributions are tax-deductible.

Please make checks or money orders payable to **Amite Co. Historical and Genealogical Society.**

(Please print)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Zip+4: _____

Telephone(s): _____

E-mail address: _____

Thank you for joining the Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society. Your contribution helps us continue to collect and preserve historic treasures from Amite County's past, as well as to promote family history. Membership also provides an opportunity to attend programs and participate in special events.

I am interested in helping with:

- Archives Membership Programs Newsletter Other (specify): _____

Amite County Historical and
Genealogical Society
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