



TARRANT COUNTY

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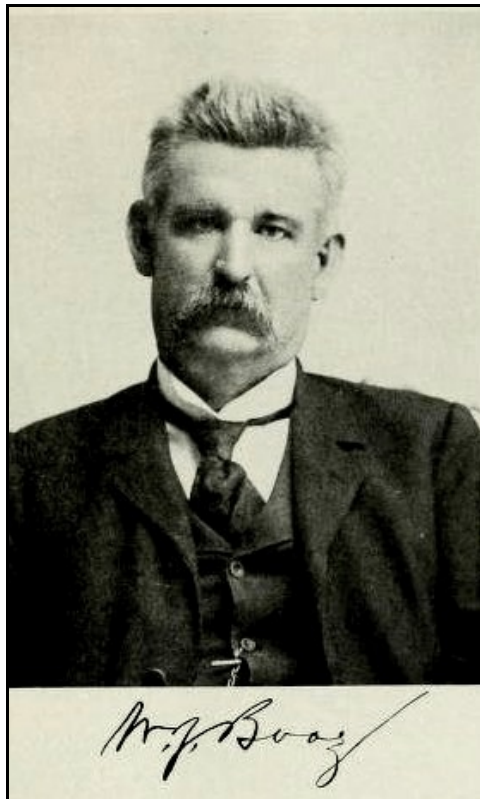
Barbara Knox and Rob Yoder, County Coordinators

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Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

William Jesse Boaz

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William Jesse Boaz was a Confederate veteran prominent in the development of both Birdville and Fort Worth. Researchers have three excellent documents with which to study his life: a biographical sketch published during his own lifetime, a first-hand account of his military service written in his old age, and an excellent and lengthy front-page obituary, complete with a photograph, which appeared in the Fort Worth newspaper.

An biographical sketch of his life, probably written from material Mr. Boaz personally supplied, appears in *A History of Texas, Together With a Biographical History of Tarrant and Parker Counties...*, published by the Lewis Publishing Co. in Chicago in 1895: “*W. J. Boaz, the subject of this sketch, was born in Hickman county, Kentucky, August 26, 1840, the third son of Samuel Boaz, a prosperous farmer. He was educated at a country school called Mount Zion, situated on the public road leading from Seliciana to Columbus, then the shipping point for almost that entire country situated on the Mississippi river.*”

“In the year 1850 Samuel Boaz, with all his family except W. J., immigrated to Texas, settling at Birdville, in Tarrant county. W. J. remained in Kentucky to dispose of the unsold properties and to follow on in the following spring. On April 15, 1860, he arrived at his father’s home with about \$1,800 in gold belonging to his father, having carried it upon horseback the entire distance,—700 miles—and at an

age less than twenty years. To transact the business and to bring this amount of coin so great a distance, through a sparsely settled Western country, was no small matter for a boy of his age, when we consider 1859 and '60 were with the period when State bank circulation was the money principally used among the people, and that kind of money which was most preferred in one State was at a discount in another.

“Kentucky bank money being the principal medium of circulation in that State, it would naturally follow that property sold there would be paid for in that paper. Texas being at the same time a specie State,. Having no banks of issue, all paper money was of course at a discount anywhere within her borders. The varied values of the moneys then used in the different States hindered, or, we might say, almost prohibited banks from issuing exchange, as they now do, from one point upon another; and there was no express company doing business in north Texas. Young Boaz bravely assumed the task, and, as stated above, brought his father the money that has never been discounted.

“In 1862 he enlisted in Colonel George H. Sweet’s regiment as a private, Fifteenth Texas Cavalry. The regiment subsequently became a part of General Deshler’s brigade, and Mrs. Boaz served in General Hindman’s Division of the Trans-Mississippi department. After several battles of minor importance the entire command was captured at Arkansas Post, January 1, 1863. The 8,000 prisoners were shipped by transfer boats to Alton, Illinois, thence by rail to Camp Douglas, Chicago, arriving at the latter place in January, 1863.

“On the night of March 16 following, young Boaz, with a comrade, William Hayworth, effected their escape by scaling the prison wall, and after traveling fifteen miles on foot arrived at a station on the Illinois Central railroad, where they purchased tickets and took passage for the South. The war closing, Mr. Boaz returned to Birdville, Tarrant county, Texas, his former home, since which time he has been engaged in several liens of business, in all of which he has been successful.

“In 1867 he was employed as a clerk at Birdville, Texas, five months. Then he engaged in trading in horses and cattle; next, in company with his brother, R. Boaz, conducted a mercantile business at this place until 1870; and in the latter year formed a partnership with J. F. Ellis at Fort Worth, Texas, the firm having a capital of \$2000. After four years, successful mercantile business, in 1874, he bought the interest of M. B. Loyd in the California and Texas Bank at this point, remaining with that institution three years.

“The bank was afterward merged into the City National Bank, in which Mr. Boaz holds a large stock. In June, 1877, the firm of Boaz & Ellis, real-estate and loan brokers, was formed, and they conducted a prosperous business until 1881. In that year Mr. Boaz organized the Traders’ National Bank, was its president seven years, and is yet a prominent stockholder.

“He was president of one of the first building and loan associations in Fort Worth, and, learning the advantages gained to the people by the operation of that association, decided to apply them in the conduct of his private business, thus helping many working men to secure homes who might not otherwise get them. In February, 1893, at the organization of the American National Bank of Fort Worth. Mr. Boaz, not desiring to assume its active management, was elected vice-president.

“August 22, 1868, in Bexar county, Texas, he was united in marriage with Miss May Belle, a daughter of William Anderson, a farmer and stock raiser by occupation. The mother was a daughter of John B. Dickson, a Major in the war of 1812. Mr. and Mrs. Anderson had the following children: May Bell, wife of our subject; J. W., deceased; Irvin A., a farmer by occupation; Hugh A., a farmer and stockman of Jones county, Texas; Mrs. G. H. Mulkey, of Fort Worth; Mrs. J. W. Dickey, of Tarrant county; and Miss Nannie Anderson. Mr. Boaz has two sisters, --Mrs. S. E. Elliston, of this city; and Mrs. M. F. Davis, of Hickman county, Kentucky.

“Our subject and wife have had eight children, namely: Luther I., cashier at the American National Bank; William L., deceased in 1887; Samuel D., with the firm of H. H. Lewis, of Fort Worth; Clement, employed by Butts Brothers; Wallace, a collector for the American National Bank; Mariola and Ernest P., and Jessie A., a daughter four months old. In political matters, Mr. Boaz affiliates with the Democratic party, his first presidential vote having been cast for James Buchanan. He is one of the leading members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; is a devoted, liberal and cordial worker in the Sunday-school, and is a friend to all benevolent enterprises. His wife is also a member of that church.”

William J. Boaz wrote an account of his army service and placed it in the archives of the Robert E. Lee Camp of United Confederate Veterans in Fort Worth: *“I was born in Hickman County, Kentucky, and enlisted at Fort Worth, Texas. My induction was to Company E, 15th Texas Cavalry, under Col. George H. Sweet, Cleburne’s Division, in the Army of Tennessee. I was captured in the fall of Arkansas Post, Arkansas, with the entire brigade. After some three months imprisonment at Camp Douglass near Chicago the command was exchanged and out in General Bragg’s army in Tennessee. In the meantime, I with one other comrade had escaped from the camp and after making our way from that place south to near the north line of the state of Mississippi was recaptured and exchanged, I rejoined Deshler’s Brigade at or near War Trace in the state of Tennessee. Later I took part in battles at Murfreesboro, Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge, Franklin, Nashville, and Atlanta. In the latter part of the war up to the battle of Franklin, General Granbury commanded the brigade, Generals Pat Cleburne, Joseph E. Johnston, and Hood the Army.”*

William J. Boaz’s official records in the National Archives are very extensive for a Confederate soldier. He enlisted on March 8, 1862 at Fort Worth, and was mustered into the Confederate service at McKinney on March 10 in Michael E. Kennedy’s Co. 15th Texas Cavalry. He brought with him a horse worth \$175 horse and equipment worth \$25. He is shown present on all the surviving regimental rolls from March 8, 1862 through April 30, 1863; on the last date he was at Camp Lee.

At some point before December 31, 1862 he became 1st Sergeant of his company. On June 30, 1863 it was noted that he was still owed money “due for use of horse from June 30 to July 25th 1862 and for use of gun from June 30, 1862 to July 11 1863.” It was noted that he had lost his gun in battle at Arkansas Post on January 11, 1863, where he was captured on that day. By February, 1863 he was a prisoner at Camp Douglas in Chicago.

Somehow gaining his release, he was again captured at Bethel, Tennessee on April 11, 1863 and was sent to Memphis, Tennessee for exchange on April 15, 1863. He was received and sent out of Gratiot Street Prison in St. Louis on the same day, April 25, 1863, and sent to City Point, Virginia

on April 28 for exchange. He was paroled at Alton, Illinois until properly exchanged. A medical record at the U. S. Post and Military Prison Hospital at Alton shows him with remittent fever, having been admitted to the hospital on April 26 and released on April 30.

He still appears as a 1st Sergeant on the rolls from July, 1863 through October 1864. He was promoted to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant under Special Order No. 11 from General Granbury to take rank from March 9, 1864. His file contains a signed report of the election held near Dalton, Georgia to raise him to 2nd Lieutenant on March 9, 1864. By September 1864 he was serving in a consolidated regiment made up of the 15th and 6th Texas Cavalry.

He was granted a 90-day leave of absence at Tupelo, Mississippi on January 22 1865. His name appears on a register at Way Hospital, Meridian, Mississippi, which says he was furloughed February 15, 1865, to which he had been admitted wounded on March 17, 1865.

William J. Boaz's headstone in Oakwood Cemetery in Fort Worth says he was born August 26, 1840 and died December 14, 1916. The printed cemetery records also contain the notation Sycamore Heights." His wife, Mary Bell Boaz, lies beside him with dates on her headstone of 1848-July 12, 1939. Both Mr. and Mrs. Boaz have death certificates on file.

A lengthy obituary for William Jesse Boaz, complete with a large photograph, appeared on the front page of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram on December 14, 1916: "*W. J. Boaz, Pioneer Here, Dies; Estate Worth \$1,000,000. William Jesse Boaz, early settler and said to have been the largest individual property owner in Fort Worth, died at his residence in Sycamore Heights some time Wednesday night. His death was discovered when members of his family went into his room to awaken him shortly after 5 o'clock Thursday morning.*

"While he was downtown only Wednesday morning, his death was not unexpected. For some time his health had been wasting rapidly but his remarkable vitality kept him up and attending to business almost to the last.

"W. J. Boaz was reputed one of the wealthiest men in Fort Worth. It was said Thursday by business acquaintances that his estate is valued at more than \$1,000,000. He was one of the city's first bankers and had been acquiring property since Fort Worth began to outgrow the village stage.

"Gave Tithe to Charity. No individual in Fort Worth gave away more. Every year found a tithe of his income checked out on the special church and benevolence account that he kept at his office at 114 S. Boaz Street. When the Missouri Avenue Methodist Church of which he had been a member since its organization, erected its building, W. J. Boaz gave a dollar for every dollar that anyone else gave.

"He was seventy-six years old August 26. He and Miss Belle Anderson were married in Bexar County August 27, 1868. Miss Anderson was a daughter of William Anderson, a farmer and stock raiser whose wife was a daughter of John B. Dixon, who served as Major in the War of 1812.

“His wife, four sons, Sam D. of Houston, Clement A. of Fort Worth, Wallace H. of Fort Worth, and Earnest O. of Fort Worth; and two daughters, Mrs. I. B. Comer and Mrs. C. C. Gumm, both of Fort Worth, besides several nephews, nieces, and grandchildren, survive.

“Funeral arrangements had not been completed Thursday.

“Here Before Railroad. William Jesse Boaz was one of the survivors of the old guard. He was one of those pioneers who came to Fort Worth before the first railroad and whose name was closely identified with such names as E. M. Daggett, Peter Smith, C. M. Peak, and Walter A. Huffman, among the dead, and K. M. VanZandt and B. P. Paddock among the living in the constant upbuilding of Fort Worth.

“He was born in Hickman County, Kentucky in 1840. In 1859, his father, Samuel Boaz, having acquired an estate of about \$15,000, principally in slaves, moved to Texas and settled at Birdville near Fort Worth. The boy wound up his father’s business and came on to Texas in the spring of 1860 riding on horseback some 1800 miles. He was a private of Colonel George H. Sweet’s 15th Texas Cavalry early in the Civil War, and his regiment later became a part of General Deshler’s Brigade. After several battles, the entire brigade was captured at Arkansas Post, January 1, 1863, and the prisoners, about 8,000 of them, were sent to Camp Douglas, a military prison located on Lake Michigan near Chicago.

“Escaped Federal Prisoner. Young Boaz and a companion escaped by scaling the prison walls the night of March 16 following, and took passage for the South at a station on the Illinois Central after having traveled fifteen miles on foot. After the war he engaged in businesses at Birdville and in 1870 he formed a partnership with B. F. Ellis in the general merchandise business at Fort Worth. In 1874 he bought out M. B. Loyd’s stock in the California and Texas Bank of Loyd, Marklee, and Co., the firm name changing to Boaz, Marklee, and Co. This was the second bank in Fort Worth. It became known as the City National Bank three years after Boaz entered the firm. In 1877 after the City National Bank had dissolved, the real estate and brokerage firm of Boaz and Ellis was formed and the partnership was not dissolved until 1886. Since that time Boaz had been in the real estate business for himself, but for a number of years had attended only to his own extensive private interests.

“When Captain H. C. Edrington came to Fort Worth in 1882 and established the Traders’ National Bank, W. J. Boaz became its vice-president. Captain Edrington was president and George Mulkey cashier.

“One of First Aldermen. Boaz was elected one of the city’s five first aldermen, April 8, 1873, just a month after the city was incorporated.

“He was one of the directors and a member of the executive board of the Tarrant County Railway Construction Company which was organized in 1875 to grade the line over the twenty-six miles from Fort Worth to the then terminus of the Texas and Pacific at Eagle Ford. After the advent of the railroad there developed a demand for increased hotel facilities and W. J. Boaz was one of the

organizers and directors of a company with \$30,000 capital to build the El Paso Hotel. The hotel opened September 22, 1877 with seventy—six rooms. It stood where the Westbrook Hotel is now.

“He was one of the big contributors to the first \$10,000 raised for the erection of the Fort Worth University buildings. He never failed to contribute time, energy, and money to a Fort Worth enterprise.

“Tribute from Paddock. This paragraph from Captain Paddock’s little book, ‘Early Days in Fort Worth,’ furnishes evidence of the generosity with which he was credited: ‘As an evidence of the change that time has wrought in church matters, it is recorded that the Rev. M. D. Fly tendered his resignation as pastor of the First Methodist Church in September, 1878 giving a reason for the action that he could not live on \$276 per year. That must have been before W. J. Boaz joined the church, and before George Mulkey made his ‘stake.’”

