



TARRANT COUNTY TXGENWEB

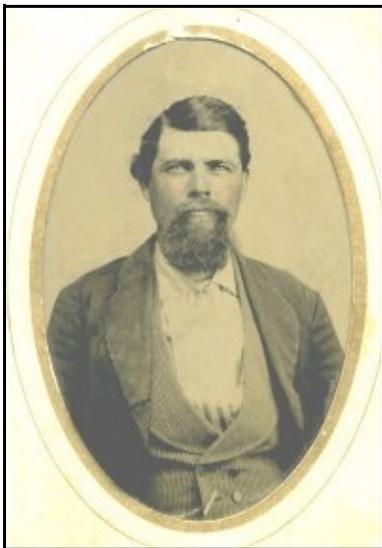
Barbara Knox and Rob Yoder, County Coordinators

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Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

John Lewis Fortner

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John Lewis Fortner, about 1875

John Lewis Fortner was a native of Missouri and a veteran of a Texas cavalry regiment. He settled in Tarrant County about 1896, and died near Keller in 1916. Descendants have placed a considerable amount of material on this family at ancestry.com.

John L. Fortner was born August 24, 1835 at White City, Benton County, Missouri. Census information suggests he may have been a son of M. Franklin and Margaret G. Fortner, natives of Tennessee and Kentucky respectively, who came to Texas about 1843 from Arkansas after having lived in Missouri around the time John L. Fortner was born. By 1846, they had settled in Dallas County, where the elder Mr. Fortner began farming. John L. Fortner is listed with the family in the 1850 Dallas County census.

The Fortners were fairly comfortable in Dallas County, at least until the War came. Franklin Fortner owned two slaves....a young woman and a child less than one year old....in 1850. By the time the 1860 census was taken, he owned one nineteen-year-old man who helped him and his sons farm their land. John L. Fortner was not with Franklin Fortner's family in 1860.

Mr. Fortner served the Confederacy as a soldier in Co. K, 19th Texas Cavalry. His records preserved in the National Archives are very sparse. His name appears on a bounty and receipt roll for the regiment, dated June 26, 1862 at Camp Stonewall Jackson, the headquarters of the 19th Texas Cavalry, at Dallas, Texas. The only other record is a receipt he received for pay, at the rate of twenty-five cents per day, for brief service as a nurse.

Fortner's pension application file contains affidavits by Enoch Strait and J. M. Merrell, both of Dallas County, who said they enlisted, served, and returned home at the same time as Mr. Fortner. Mr. Strait, who was a member of the 18th Texas Cavalry, enlisted at Dallas in January, 1862. When the 1860 Dallas County census was taken, Enoch Strait was living with his parents and siblings next-door to the family of Franklin Fortner.

In her Confederate widow's pension application, Mrs. Fortner said she and John were married July 15, 1877 in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana. She was Margaret Augusta Russell, and she was born October 7, 1848 in Alabama. She was a daughter of William Russell and his wife, Margaret (Moore) Russell. According to family members at ancestry.com, she was first married to a Mr. Watts, by whom she had at least one son.

The census taker in 1880 found the Fortner family living in Ward One of Sabine Parish, Louisiana. Mr. Fortner said he was a native of Missouri, and that both his parents were South Carolinians. Mrs. Fortner said she was born in Alabama, as were both her parents. They had three children with them: John (born about 1876), Ida (born about 1879), and Lewis, born in the early part of 1880. John Fortner was working as a laborer. The four-year-old son, John, was actually John Watts, Mrs. Fortner's son in her first marriage.

When the 1900 census was taken, Mr. and Mrs. Fortner were living in Tarrant County at Keller. They were apparently living in a mixed family with their daughter, Ida, her husband, William W. Caster, and the Casters' child. Mrs. Fortner told the census taker she had given birth to nine children, six of whom were still living. This would indicate there were three who died young about whom we have found no records. There are no readable headstones standing in any northeast Tarrant County cemeteries for anyone named Fortner.

John L. Fortner of Roanoke, Tarrant County, applied for a pension in 1914. He said he was seventy-nine years old, born in White County, Missouri. He said he had been in Texas about seventy years and at Roanoke for about eighteen years. He was a farmer and a merchant. At the time he applied he owned only one hundred dollars in personal property. There are some handwritten letters in his file from his widow, trying to have his pension continued after his death.

Mr. Fortner's death certificate says he was found dead at his home near Keller on September 13, 1916, and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Fort Worth the next day. The informant was W. W. Caster of Roanoke. The certificate cited natural causes, and did not include his birth date. For some reason it also records that he was a widower, which he was not. His government-furnished headstone shows he had the rank of Ordnance Sergeant.

Mrs. M. A. Fortner of Roanoke, Tarrant County, applied for a Confederate widow's pension in 1917. She said J. L. Fortner died in Tarrant County on September 11, 1916. Mrs. Fortner said she was sixty-eight years old, a native of Alabama, and had been living in Texas for twenty-three years. She said she had been living at Roanoke for fifteen years.

Her file contains five handwritten letters from her. One from her which was placed in her husband's file, dated January 8, 1917 was written at Derry, Louisiana, when she said she was too old, sick,

poor, and rheumatic to travel back to Texas to attend to applying for her pension. She said she had a son in Lawrence, Oklahoma. She drew her pension from May 17, 1917 to May 1, 1924, when she went to Oklahoma. She stayed there until June 14, 1924, when she returned to Texas. Statements in the file also suggest she may have lived in Oklahoma for about one year in the 1917-1918 time period.

When the 1920 census was taken, Mrs. Fortner was living in Anderson County, Texas in the home of her son, Felix J. Watts. Ten years later, in 1930, she lived in Fort Worth with the family of her daughter, Ida Caster.

Family members report that Mrs. Margaret A. Fortner died on August 4, 1931 in Oklahoma City, Canadian County, Oklahoma. A newspaper obituary for her was preserved by her daughter, Mrs. Caster: *"Mrs. Margaret Fortner, the mother of Mrs. W. W. Caster of 1122 Burnett Avenue, died of acute indigestion Tuesday in Oklahoma City, at the home of her daughter, Mrs. D. C. Bowers, with whom she had been visiting for three weeks. Mrs. Fortner, a native of Alabama, came to Texas 40 years ago, shortly after her marriage. She and her husband settled in Fort Worth, where Mrs. Fortner had lived, with the exception of the few years she had spent visiting her children, the balance of her life. She is survived by four sons, J. F. Watts of Neches, Texas, Louis and Bill Fortner of Lincoln, Illinois, and Ed Fortner of Kirkland, Wash., a sister Mrs. E. O. Cherry, and two brothers, M. P. Russell of Fort Worth and Charles Russell of Louisiana."*

Ida Gertrude Fortner was born November 4, 1878 in Louisiana. She married William Wesley Caster (1865-1950) on September 17, 1897 in Tarrant County. She died in the Watson Nursing Home in Fort Worth, Tarrant County, on July 21, 1973. She was buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Fort Worth.

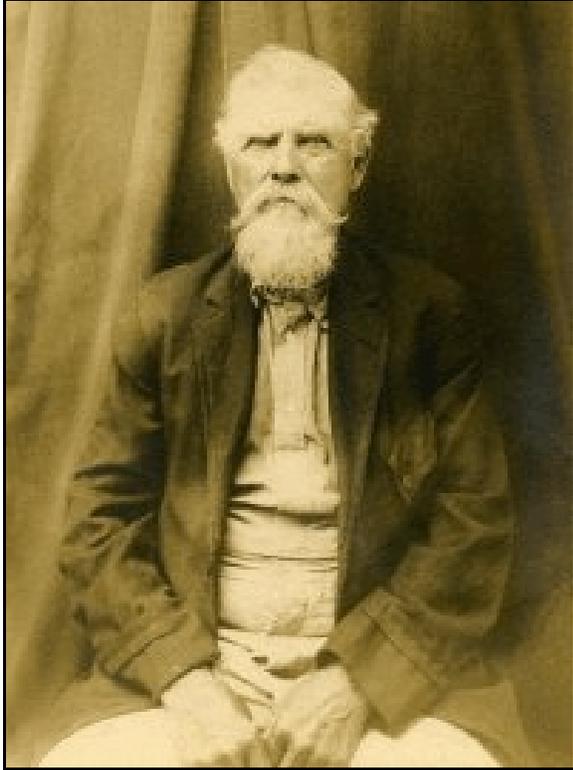
Lewis Allen Fortner was born in Louisiana on May 4, 1880. He married Florence Lula Bowman on March 16, 1913. In 1930 he was living and working in Williamson County, Illinois. He died in Illinois after 1931.

Dennis B. Fortner was born in Louisiana on February 27, 1882. He died in 1894.

Edward Huston Fortner in Louisiana on August 3, 1884. His wife's name was Ethel. He died after 1931 in Washington state.

Lillian Fortner was born August 16, 1889. She married Dewitt C. Bowers in 1904.

William Gilbert Fortner was born September 24, 1893. He died in Carmi, White County, Illinois on December 11, 1950. He married Lillian Belle Cruse. Oddly, this son is recorded as "Mathew" in the 1900 census.



John Lewis Fortner, about 1912



Mrs. Margaret Fortner

Portraits courtesy of Nelda Scoggin Reynolds.

