



# TARRANT COUNTY

## TXGENWEB

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## Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

### Thomas Higgins

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Thomas Higgins was a Confederate veteran who spent the last years of his life in present-day Southlake. He lies buried in Hood Cemetery in Southlake.

One of Thomas's descendants, Frances Higgins Hogue, wrote an article about Thomas and his family for inclusion in the Grapevine Area History (1879). Some excerpts from it follow: *"The parents of Thomas Higgins were born in Ireland and after migrating to the United States, settled in Pennsylvania, where Thomas was born [about 1824]...At an early age, he went to California to dig for gold, and according to legend was quite successful. After settling in Texas he made two trips to California with wild horses to be sold to the gold miners. On one trip he was in a snow storm in the Sierra Mountains and barely managed to escape with his life...* [There is a Thomas Higgins in the 1850 California census of Placerville and vicinity in El Dorado County who was born about 1810 in Pennsylvania. He was working as a gold miner. It is tantalizing to think this may be the Thomas Higgins who later came to Tarrant County, though it would be almost impossible to prove or disprove.]

*"When his bride-to-be arrived in St. Louis, he set out on horseback. There he met Elizabeth who was about eighteen years old, and after their marriage they started back to Tarrant County by wagon drawn by oxen. They had acquired their household necessities while in St. Louis...The Thomas Higgins homestead was located about seven miles west-northwest of Grapevine, Texas, across the road northwest of the old Hood Cemetery...*

*"Elizabeth gave birth to a son, John T., October 8, 1858. He lived one month [died November 8, 1858]. Then a pair of twin girls, Mary Margaret and Nancy Louisa were born November 17, 1859. George M. was born March 31, 1862 and died September 5, 1863. Zacharias Coleman "Tex" was born in 1864 or 1865 (he never married). Anna B. was born in 1867 and died August 6, 1881 of heart problems. Martin Van Buren was November 21, 1869 and died September 17,*

*1935. Mattie Lee and a twin sister who died at birth were born March 28, 1872. Mattie Lee died October 22, 1956 and is buried in the cemetery at Kingfisher, Oklahoma. Roxie B. was born in 1874.*

*“The first pair of twins were married to two Oklahoma farmers. Mary Margaret married Cornelius A. Owen in 1870, and they had three children. Margaret was killed in a car wreck and was fifty one at the time of her death. Louisa married Marshall J. Haynes in 1881, and they had three children; Louisa lived to past eighty years of age, and died in 1940...”*

*“Roxie and Mattie Lee lived with their mother on the farm in Tarrant County until they were in their twenties. Roxie Higgins married Irwin Campbell...”*

*“Mattie Lee Higgins married John Anderson in November of 1900...Martin Van Buren Higgins was married to Kizzie Permelia (Kezia Pamela) Byas in Peytonville, Texas in 1892...”*

*“Thomas Higgins died December 7, 1880 at 55 or 56 years of age and is buried in the Hood Cemetery near the Lonesome Dove Community. Elizabeth, his wife, was born September 3, 1838 in Kentucky and died November 6, 1901. She is buried in the Zion Cemetery in Omega, Oklahoma, and her gravestone gives her middle initial as ‘F.’”*

Descendants report that Thomas Higgins had a land grant in Dallas County, Missouri. His property was adjacent to that of his father-in-law, Zachariah Piersall, and James Frogge, another immigrant to the Southlake area of northeast Tarrant County.

In the 1860 tax list of Tarrant County, Thomas Higgins is shown as the owner of one hundred eighty acres of the D. Castor survey, worth \$540. This survey was laid off in a square and lies in modern-day Southlake, south of Dove Road and west of Peytonville Road. The survey’s northeast corner is at the intersection of those two streets. Its east boundary goes south from that point along Peytonville Road to a point a short distance south of Plantation Drive’s intersection with Peytonville Road. The survey’s north line lies parallel to and perhaps a little south of Dove Road. There are no modern-day streets which correspond to the survey’s west and south lines.

Thomas Higgins served the Confederacy as a private in Capt. William W. McGinnis’s Company of the 20<sup>th</sup> Brigade of Texas State Troops. A comrade of Higgins’s made the following statement about the company in 1931 in a Confederate pension application: *“...I was in the service in and around the City of Dallas, Dallas County, Texas from the time of my enlistment until the close of the war...served in Co. “A” being a troop of Cavalry, a part of Col. McGinnis Regiment. We wore the Confederate uniform and drew our rations from the Confederate government. Our duties consisted principally of rounding up deserters...”*

An affidavit made by Grapevine resident by B. R. Wall in 1931 said. *“...Col. McGinnis lived between here and Roanoke, Texas and died when I was a small boy. I have often heard the people speak of this organization as a cavalry troop which chased bushwhackers and deserters...”*

Thomas's wife, Elizabeth F. Higgins, was born September 3, 1838 in Kentucky. She was a daughter of Zachariah Piersall (1803-1877), who also came to this community and lies buried in White's Chapel Cemetery. Mrs. Higgins was the sister of another of our veterans, George Coleman Piersall; Mr. Piersall said in his pension application that he was living with his sister and her family when the War began. Mrs. Higgins also made an affidavit for him in which she said the same thing. Zachariah Piersall's headstone says "My Husband," which may indicate that his wife also came here.

In the 1870 census, Thomas Higgins is shown next-door to his old Confederate commander, William W. McGinnis. He and Elizabeth have five children living with them: Mary Higgins (born about 1860); Nancy Higgins (born about 1860); Zacharia Higgins (born about 1865); Ann Higgins (born about 1867); and Mart Higgins (born about 1869). George C. Piersall is also in the household in that year.

When the 1880 census taker visited the Higgins home in Tarrant County, Thomas said he was born in Pennsylvania, and that both his parents were born in Ireland. There were six Higgins children still at home: Nancy L. Higgins (born about 1860); Zack C. Higgins (born about 1865); Anna R. Higgins (born about 1867); Martin V. Higgins (born about 1870); Mattie L. Higgins (born about 1872); and Rockie B. Higgins (a female, born about 1874).

Thomas died at his home in present-day Southlake on December 7, 1880. He lies buried in Hood Cemetery there. Mrs. Higgins did not apply for a Confederate pension in Texas or Oklahoma.

The Higgins home in 1895 was in present-day Southlake somewhere in the vicinity of the west end of Robin Street, south of Dove Road, west of State Highway 114. This lies not far inside the north line of the D. Castor survey which Thomas had already purchased by 1860.

The 1900 census shows Thomas's widow, Elizabeth Higgins, living with her daughter, Mattie Higgins, in the Southlake community. Mattie was born in March 1872. Elizabeth Higgins said she had given birth to nine children, six of whom were still living. Family sources say Mrs. Higgins died November 6, 1901 at Omega, Oklahoma.



The Martin Van Buren Higgins family

In 1892 Martin (son of Thomas Higgins) married Kezia "Kid" Permelia Byas, daughter of veteran Thomas Harold Byas. Their children shown are Earl Thomas, born 1893 and Porter Raymond, born 1895. See Thomas Byas' biography for another photo of Kezia.

Photo courtesy of Carla Graves

