



# East Texas Historical Journal

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## East Texas

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Although Sacred Harp singing has continued to the present, the Zion Hill Church began to modernize its musical service by the purchase of a dozen hymnals in 1883 and by adding a piano in the last sixty years.

At the August, 1968, celebration many people from the surrounding area attended and many of these people could be classified as older citizens. The oldest person present at the celebration and the oldest in membership was Mrs. Beatrice Cates, who has been a member of the church since 1900.

Membership and services have increased to include church every Sunday. All members during the one hundred years have been catalogued alphabetically by Mrs. Dunn in her history of the church.

The small church continues to serve a third, fourth and fifth generation of members as its dignity has increased through one hundred years of service to God and to mankind.

### The Bradley House

The History Club of Fairfield has purchased and restored the Bradley House. This was a tremendous undertaking and at times the most enthusiastic club members were almost ready to give up the task.

The restoration committee consisted of:

Mrs. H. B. Steward, Chairman

Mrs. C. N. Williford, Co-Chairman and President of the History Club

Mrs. H. D. Whitaker, Secretary

Mrs. T. R. Bonner, Treasurer

Mrs. Edward Parker

Mrs. H. L. Woodridge

Mrs. A. H. Bass

A successful financial project of the club was the establishment of a "thrift shop". The shop was kept open only on Fridays and Saturdays and sold cakes, candy, historical plates of the old Val Verde Cannon of the Civil War vintage, and some two hundred and fifty copies of *Fair Haven* were also sold. *Fair Haven* is a history of Freestone County and was written by Bradley Jefferson who was born in the Bradley House. The History Club also sold its old club house for \$7,000.00 which sum was added to the purchase and restoration. Donations were solicited from friends and memorials from pioneer families for family members who had passed away. An unusual harvest dinner held near Thanksgiving also proved profitable. A local bank was generous with a loan. Altogether the club has an investment of over \$45,000.00 in the Bradley House and its furnishings.

Ray Benefield, of San Augustine, served as consultant and contractor, and Mrs. Steward says working with Mr. Benefield make the restoration "a very pleasant task."

The Freestone County Historical Survey Committee with Llewellyn Notley Chairman, also gave the History Club valuable assistance.

The dedication program was held Sunday, September 29, 1968. Master of Ceremony—H. D. Whitaker, Member of Freestone County Survey Committee

Band Concert—Fairfield High School Band, W. J. Buchanan, Director

Invocation—Dr. Frank Dent, Houston

Introduction of Guests—Master of Ceremony

History of the Bradley House—Mrs. H. B. Steward, Chairman of Restoration Committee

Introduction of Speaker—Mrs. Frank Covert III, Member of Texas State Historical Survey Committee, Austin

Address—F. Lee Lawrence, President of Texas Historical Foundation, Tyler

Unveiling of Marker—Mrs. Mary Northern, Granddaughter of Builder of Bradley House, Galveston

Benediction—Rev. Don Willis, Pastor of the First United Methodist Church, Fairfield



**The Bradley House since restoration.**

As a part of the dedication program Mrs. H. B. Steward gave the history of the Bradley House:

The history of the Bradley House, the pioneer families connected with it and its fables are interesting, although I shall attempt to be as brief as possible. The house deserves much more than I will say and should properly have been called the Moody-Bradley House.





### The Bradley House Marker

According to records available to us, this stately old home was built in the summer and fall of the year 1860. At the time, Fairfield was a young and thriving town, cotton was king, living was easy and the future held great promise.

In 1860, Freestone County was considered one of the wealthiest counties of our State. According to one of the early editions of the *Texas Almanac*, in the year 1860, slaves were assessed for taxes at a greater value than was the real estate of the county. In those early days, in this area, Fairfield too was the center of culture. Being the county seat there were a number of lawyers, doctors, teachers and wealthy landowners among its citizens. There was a college for young women known as Fairfield Female College which was founded in the year 1858, having been financed and maintained by private funds donated by citizens of the area. Many daughters of old families of the South, particularly during the War Between the States, were sent here to be educated and, too, to be safe and far from the battles and the many hardships of the war. It is interesting to note that the year 1860 was an election year and what is more interesting is that this was the year Abraham Lincoln won the nomination and was elected President of the United States.

If only old houses could talk, and some say that they do, in a way, much time and work would be saved that is spent in research that is necessary to ascertain the original owners and builders, subsequent owners and their family histories. When the Fairfield History Club embarked on its project of purchasing and restoration of the house we were certain that Captain L. D. Bradley had built it. We had heard of his fame and gallantry at the Battle of Vicksburg during the Civil War, his fame as a lawyer and district judge and leader in all worthy affairs of the area. We had also learned much about the prominence and outstanding character and citizenship of other members of his family. It has actually been the Bradley House for almost a century, this being the ninety-ninth year, and 1969 will complete the century, although it was built in 1860 as we will see from the following investigations and records.

When negotiating for purchase of the property we began interviewing old timers, among who were Dr. Billy Sneed, Mrs. Ross Bell, Mrs. Lee Kirgan, Mr. Ed Riley and George Proctor, a Negro who is a fine and reputable citizen of our town. All remembered Mrs. Matt Bradley who lived here alone in the house for many years, but no one remembered her husband of her family. We began to suspect that she was not Captain L. D. Bradley's widow, but WHO WAS SHE?—And how did she acquire this house? When talking with George Proctor, who had lived nearby when only a small boy, he told me 'Mrs. Steward, the onliest way you can find out about the Bradley House is from the Black and the White'.

Since we had received only a partial abstract from the former owner we found it necessary to make a search for the records of wills, deeds, marriage license and court proceedings, a new experience for me. With the able assistance of Mrs. Bess Cely, chief clerk in the local abstract office, I soon was reading the last Will and Testament of Frank M. Bradley which read: 'I hereby give and devise to my beloved wife Martha E. Bradley, the homestead tract of land on which I now reside at Fairfield, Texas, being a part of the I. H. Reed League in the N.E. corner of the same and containing 27-8/10 A.' A search was then made for earlier ownership of the property and a deed was found from W. L. Moody, of Galveston, to F. M. Bradley, dated June, 1869, conveying this same property for a consideration of \$2,800 in gold. Further search revealed a deed from Abner H. Reed to W. L. Moody, dated May, 1860, conveying the property for a consideration of \$520.

Records of the county are proof that land in this area was selling at from three to five dollars per acre and since W. L. Moody only paid \$520 for the 27-8/10 acres we assumed there was a small dwelling on it. Since the property had increased in value from \$520 to \$2,800 in gold in the short period of nine years, is conclusive proof that the Bradley House was actually built by W. L. Moody. However, since title to the property remained in the Bradley name from 1869 till the year 1918, it has been known, as previously stated, as "The Bradley House".



Builder of the house, William Lewis Moody, or W. L. Moody as he was known in business circles, was born in Essex County, Virginia, near Richmond, in the year 1828. His granddaughter, Mrs. Mary Moody Northen—who is here today—has told me something of his early life and how he happened to come to Texas, a most interesting thing to relate and I am sure all of you will enjoy its telling. He was one of thirteen children, whose parents having died within a year of each other, while the children were yet young, were taken over to be reared by his father's sister, Miss Nancy Ann Moody. With hard work and determination Moody was graduated from the University of Virginia. After graduation from the University he soon left his home state to seek his fortune and while traveling by boat to New Orleans he met a friend from Mississippi, who, also, was traveling south, with plans to come to Texas. At the time, he had not made up his mind on where he might locate. His family thinks he probably would have remained in New Orleans had he not found the heat and mosquitoes so unbearable, so his friend had little trouble in persuading him to go to Texas. They came by boat to Galveston Island, this being the year 1852. While there they heard of the wonders of Dallas, Texas, a favorable location and with great opportunities for those who cared to come there. They immediately made plans to start for that city—stopping in Houston, at a hotel where the rooms were divided by thin partition walls that did not reach to the ceiling. Their night's sleep was broken by the loud snoring of a man in an adjoining room. Being unable to sleep, on account of the loud snoring, Mr. Moody's friend knocked on the wall, waking the snoring man, who let them know he was very angry about being disturbed. The next morning while in the lobby Mr. Moody's companion spoke again of the snoring man's anger, and while Mr. Moody was out at the well, back of the hotel, washing up for breakfast, he heard a shot in the lobby. He immediately returned to the lobby to find his friend had been shot to death by the angry man. He was shocked, alone, with very little money and far from home, family and friends. He remarked 'I heard a small Negro boy singing *Carry Me Back to Ole Virginny* and with all my heart I wished I were there with my brothers and sisters and Aunt Nancy.'

However, he had made up his mind to go to Dallas, so he bought a horse and headed that way, stopping for a while in Centerville to let his tired horse have a much needed rest, continuing then on to Fairfield where his horse died. Having stopped at a hotel on the courthouse square and without a horse he asked questions about the land, the countryside and its people. Here he met a Mr. Witte who asked him to join him in the practice of law and the law firm of Witte-Moody was formed. It was not long before he discovered his new partner, Witte, could neither read nor write, so it was not long before a dissolution of the partnership took place. Looking around at the possibilities here, he decided on going in to merchandising and opened a store.

It was not long before his brothers and sisters and Aunt Nancy moved to Fairfield. His brothers joined him in business under the name of W. L. Moody and Brothers, as the papers of that day testify. Mr. Moody was active in the politics and civic affairs of the county and

town and was a leader in the organization of Fairfield Female College in 1858-59.

The 1860 census of Fairfield shows: 'W. L. Moody, age 32, Merchant, Value of Real Estate \$2750.00, Value of Personal Property \$2000.00. Born in Virginia—Married within the Year 1860'. It also showed 'P. Elizabeth Moody—Female—Age 21—Born in Alabama—married within the year 1860'. The Freestone County marriage license record book shows W. L. Moody and P. Elizabeth Bradley were married January 19, 1860.

P. Elizabeth Bradley, Lizzie as she was called, was one of eleven children. She came to Texas with her father, Francis Merriwether Bradley, and five brothers about 1854. Her brothers were F. M. Bradley, Jr., L. D. Bradley, George Bradley, Thornton Boykin Bradley and William Nicholas Bradley.

Before I tell you more of F. M. Bradley's Family I think you should be told more about the Moodys and their life in this house.—In May, 1860, after the marriage of W. L. Moody and Lizzie Bradley in January of that year he bought this property and built this house for his bride. Their first child, Victoria, was born November 24, 1860. In the fall of 1861, Moody organized a company of volunteers to fight for the South. His company was the first Freestone County soldiers to see action in the war. Wounded in battle in 1863 he was returned home and in 1864 was sent to Austin and assigned to post duty there until the war ended.

There was sorrow at home in Fairfield. His daughter, Victoria had died in 1863, and also there was an infant stillborn. In 1865 Colonel W. L. Moody returned home to his family. His son, W. L. Moody, Jr., had been born in January of that year. This son gave him hope and inspiration that helped blot out the horrors of the war and death of his daughter, Victoria, but he found his business gone and there seemed little prospect in the future here. Slaves were freed and the wealth of the area depleted. It was then that he decided to move to Galveston which had become an important seaport and there he moved with his family in the spring of 1866. This proved to be a wise decision as he became very wealthy and one of the foremost business leaders in the Southwest. In June, 1869, he sold the Fairfield Home to his father-in-law, F. M. Bradley, for \$2800.00 in gold. The first wife of F. M. Bradley, Zillah Pherabe Goldsby, died in Virginia in 1852. She was the mother of Lizzie Bradley Moody and her five brothers who came to Texas with their father.

Either just before or soon after coming to Texas, about 1854 he was married to Rebecca E. Bradley. No children were born of this marriage and she died here in September, 1870. Her portrait, painted by an artist in New Orleans, was returned to this house the past Thursday through the generosity of Dr. and Mrs. Frank M. Covert, III, of Austin.

Bradley later married Martha E. Bradley, who survived him for many years. From an article in the Fairfield Recorder we find the following:



'He was one of the wealthiest and most influential men in the County's history in the early days, and his descendants have been and are among the best people in the County'. From the State Archives in Austin we find in the 1860 census of Fairfield that he was a farmer with real estate valued at \$15,910 and possessed personal property value at \$70,000.

The surviving widow of F. M. Bradley, Martha E. Bradley, who was usually called and referred to as Miss Matt and later as Grandma Bradley, continued to live in this house up to three or four years of her death in 1913. Probably because she was lonely, although she had ample income otherwise, she kept music teachers and school teachers. She raised chickens and turkeys, kept a beautiful yard, full of roses, various shrubs, flowering bulbs and trees. As she grew older she hired others to manage her properties and keep her yard and the premises beautiful. One such young man was Walker Carter Jefferson. The Jeffersons were a young, recently wed couple. Miss Matt persuaded them to live with her as she wanted their companionship, they being of prominent families. They were not related but evidently much attached to her for when their son was born there, they named him Bradley Carter Jefferson, so another successful and prominent man was born in this house. Some of you probably knew Bradley Jefferson and I know many of you here today knew of him. He loved his native state, where he lived all of his life with the exception of a few years.

This love for his state and close association with rural life in his early years, no doubt, accounts for the warm poetry with which he colors his native state and described its rural people of that day in the extremely interesting book *Fair Haven* which so vividly depicts the early life in Freestone County. At the time of writing this book Mr. Jefferson was Chief Editorial writer, Associate Editor and Member of the Board of Directors of *Dallas Times Herald*. He was on the staff of the *Times Herald* from 1919 till 1962. His wife, Kay who has made a substantial contribution to us in the restoration of this house is here with us today. In addition she has given 250 copies of *Fair Haven* to sell to help our fund. Her son, Dr. Alfred Carter Jefferson, is an associate professor at Rutgers University. Her daughter Emily lives in New York, where she has her own teen repertory theater and directs youth classes at the American Music and Drama Academy.

After the Jeffersons moved away Miss Matt was indeed very lonely, this house at that time being in the country and surrounded by a wooded area. The house had become a burden and she had grown old. We do not know the exact year, but some three or four years before her death in 1913, she went to Corsicana with a step-niece, who had come to visit her, evidently expecting to return here after a short visit. The days grew into weeks and the weeks into years without her returning to live in the house. Some say she did return a time or two, but only to see that it was still here. This leaving, for what appears to have been for only a short visit, accounts for the fact, that for many years an open sugar bowl, dishes and silverware were left on the table, clothes thrown on the back of chairs and a bonnet hanging on a bed



post. The closed house soon caught the interest of the young people of the town. They played here, in and around it, read books from the fine library and some studied here. Others looked for ghosts and listened for spooks, for it was firmly believed by many that it was haunted. To them every movement of the curtains and trees and the flapping wings of birds that came in through broken windows proved that surely something here was unusual. Many nights, according to some, dim lights could be seen in the dining room. Speculation about the owner of the house was an interesting topic of conversation.

Well, the yard grew up in weeds, vines took over the shrubbery, fences and trees. Much of the beautiful furniture and smaller things disappeared.



**Mrs. H. B. Steward**

In 1918 the house was sold outside the Bradley family, first to L. C. Kirgan, who sold to Jim Swinburn, who sold to L. L. Coleman from whom the History Club bought it last year.

I can not close without telling something about the Club's wishes to buy and restore this house in order to preserve it and its history for future generations. Most of us were anxious, a few thought it was too great an undertaking. We already owned a club house and were moving along in our routine club years, having interesting programs, contributing to many civic activities and assisting in the educational and cultural phases of our community. Therefore, it was with mixed emotions that we approached the huge task of purchasing and restoration. I felt a great responsibility, I truly felt that I might be over-persuading my fellow club members into a project that would take years to complete, if ever. Although C. N. Williford, husband of our club president, so generously had given us \$1000.00 needed for the earnest money, still we were skeptical of our ability to handle it. In fact we were about to the point of giving it up when we received a most needed boost from some of our friends who were visiting here, Mr. and Mrs. Fred H. Moore and Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Bolton. When they saw the house and heard of its historical interest, they insisted that it was a project so worthy that it just should not be dropped. Mr. Moore made a substantial financial contribution and Mr. Bolton assumed responsibility for having all of the legal work done gratis in setting up the foundation and making it both tax free and for contributions being deductible for income tax reports. Mr. Moore is the immediate past President of the North American Division of Mobil Oil Corporation, New York, and since his recent retirement is living in Austin. Mr. and Mrs. Moore are here with us today.

Mr. Bolton, a Vice President of Mobil Oil Corporation, is now living in Houston, would have been here today with Mrs. Bolton, had it not been for the fact that she is confined to a hospital. Mr. Charles B. Wallace, Associate General Counsel of Mobil Oil Corporation, Dallas, who also aided us in the complicated legal matters involved, is here today with Mrs. Wallace. I felt compelled to mention and introduce these people because of the great inspiration they gave us at a time we needed it most.

To Mrs. Mary Moody Northen, we owe so, so, much. For without her generous New Year's Gift, and a further contribution from the Moody Foundation, we could not have started the restoration and come this fast, toward its completion.

In conclusion to say that we are so proud of what has been accomplished to this time, and also for the encouragement and generous assistance given us by many others, who time does not permit being named, would be the understatement of the year.