

GEORGE W. [STEPHENS] STEVENS

BORN-JULY 12, 1831

DIED-APRIL 11, 1893

HE, WITH OTHERS, STOOD EVER READY AS ARMED GUARDIANS  
FOR PIONEER WISE COUNTY, TEXAS

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CONFEDERATE 46<sup>TH</sup> TEXAS CAVALRY  
(FRONTIER MOUNTED CAVALRY)

EARLY LEADER OF SEVERAL COUNTY MILITIA COMPANIES

CAPTAIN, COMPANY "B" FRONTIER BATTALION- TEXAS  
RANGERS

THREE TERM SHERIFF OF WISE COUNTY

CENSUS ENUMERATOR WISE COUNTY 1880

WISE COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR 1880-1882

EDDIE R. MATNEY



Research into the early pioneer history of most counties of Texas will show the stories of what would seem to be a breed of people seldom found today. Wise County had her share.

In 1836, after the territory known as "Texas" was won from Mexico, a new State government was organized and advertisements were placed in newspapers back in the old States describing free land. Men, often with their wife and family would load a wagon with the necessary home furnishings and goods, and would start out on a long dangerous journey for the promised-land of Texas.

By 1845 when Texas was admitted into the United States, the population was increasing to where the various Indian tribes were slowly pushed into the northern and western portion of the State. The main supply of Indian staples, namely the buffalo and deer, were being killed off by the settlers for their own food source. This led to dangerous and deadly confrontations between the parties. A line of forts and camps, anchored by Fort Worth on the Trinity River, were established north to south across the frontier of the State by U.S. Infantry and Cavalry for protection.

As the decade of the 1850's began there was no let up of Indian raids into the settled areas of the State. In 1854 a commission was formed by State and Federal politicians to find an area in north Texas to place reservations for confining and "civilizing" the red men. Unfortunately, most of the tribes who were to live on the reservations were of the less aggressive type, such as the Caddo, Delaware, Shawnee, Waco and other minor groups.

Since few settlers were in the area, two reservations were established in what is now the south-western portion of Young County. 69,120 acres were surveyed and platted. Agents were sent out to coerce Indians into moving onto the newly formed lower reservation. The smaller reservation, to the west, was used to induce some of the Southern Comanche to come in.

Upwards of 1000 Indians agreed to live on the white mans reservation and learn to farm and live like the white man.

Most of the Comanche and Kiowa would not settle on the reservations, preferring to roam throughout northern and western Texas including the panhandle country.

Some military personnel were assigned to live on the reservations for protection of their Indian charges, and also the agents and teachers hired to instruct the Indians.

In approximately this same time period, the first white farmers and ranchers, armed with only a single-shot rifle and/or a shotgun for protection, began to move into the wilds of what would be Jack, Young, and Wise counties.

Within a year enough families had moved into the county that the population

desired some self control of their legal actions, the nearest Law-officers and Courts being located in Gainesville and Denton, the present Wise County was then a part of Cook County. Following rather fast legal actions, a new county was surveyed out of Cook County. The new county was given the name of Wise County.

Now needing a County-seat, a somewhat bitter struggle for its location took place before the present site of Decatur was selected. A settler's cabin was moved up on the hill for a Court-House and the new site on the hill was given the name of Taylorsville.

At this time, late 1855 or early 1856, a small wagon-train of settlers rolled into Wise County composed of the Jennings families, the George W. Stephens family, and perhaps a few other families, all, recently from Hempstead County, Arkansas.

George Stephens, the subject of this paper, along with his two life-long friends Tom and Henry Jennings would be among the leaders in providing the much needed armed protection for the next twenty years of the young county.

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Franklin Pierce Stephens and his wife Janette were living in Georgia when their first child was born sometime around 1810. She was given the name of "Ann Pierce".

Perhaps around 1821, the Stephens family moved to what would become Lowndes County, Alabama. In 1822, another daughter was born which they named "Sarah Jane".

"Eaton", a son was added (date unknown) followed in 1838 by "Elijah". On July 12, 1831, George Washington Stephens entered the growing family. A brother was added by the arrival of "William B." in 1836.

Living close by, or perhaps as neighbors to the Stephens, was the Jennings family. One of the grown son's was named James, who would marry Ann Pierce Stephens in 1825. Among the James Jennings children, we find William Henry born in 1827 and Thomas L., born in 1830 who were soon to become close and trustworthy friends to young George Stephens.

Shortly before the 1840 census was taken, the Stephens, and the Jennings family moved out of Lowndes County. It is believed (this has not been researched) that both families moved together into Mississippi.

In the year 1837, Sarah Jane Stephens, at the age of 15 years, met and married 25 year old John R. Manning, a large cotton farmer living in DeSoto County, Mississippi. The 1850 DeSoto County census shows Mr. Manning, his wife Sarah Jane, and their seven children. Also living with them were two of Sarah Jane's brothers, William and Elijah, and the latest member of

the Stephens family, Ann E. (Elizabeth?) born in 1846. Where the rest of the Stephens family is located is unknown.

Three of the James Jennings children were also born in Mississippi. Sometime after 1847, and before 1850, the Jennings family got the wanderlust again and moved to Mine Creek Township, Hempstead County, Arkansas. Traveling with them, or, perhaps soon joining the Jennings family to live with them, was George Stephens.

The occupation of the two Jennings boys, Will and Tom, as well as George Stephens is listed as laborers in the 1850 census. It is most likely that over the next few years, here is where they would learn the carpenter trade. Hempstead County, located in the extreme southwestern section of the State, was organized in 1818 with the town of Hope becoming the County-seat. Mine Creek Township was located just to the north of Hope and in 1850 contained 37 families with approximately 380 in population.

Mr. Jennings, being a farmer, soon after arriving would have settled on some land and began to pursue his livelihood, aided by the rest of the family, including, now 20 year old George Stephens. It wasn't very long before a young lady in the Township began to catch the attention of Mr. Stephens. Martha Ann, the youngest daughter of farmer James and Louisa McDonald, late from Tennessee, George would soon be courting her.

George and Martha Ann, 18 years of age, were married in 1851. They probably choose to live with the Jennings family or her parents, Mr. and Mrs. McDonald.

Their first child, Nancy Ann was born in 1852 followed by the second, Susan, born 1854.

Perhaps in early spring of 1855, for reasons unknown, the Jennings family decided to move again. Loading all their worldly goods into wagons, the Jennings clan with George and his young family left Arkansas, taking several weeks, bound for the open frontier of north Texas.

Arriving in the newly organized Wise County, the little wagon train pulled into Taylorsville, located on a flat topped hill dominating the surrounding prairie in the central part of the county. There were several cabins around the area, but only one little building on the northeast side of the top of the hill. This little building had recently been moved there and was to serve as the temporary County center of justice. All over the top of the hill which was several hundred yards across, were painted stakes marking out the proposed streets and future sites for business buildings. The County founders had big plans.

The Jennings and Stephens group arrived at just the right period for the young men to gain immediate employment in their occupation as carpenters.

Clifford Cates, in his book "Pioneer History of Wise County" states that property on the new "square" on the hill was soon being sold at a price of one hundred dollars each. Almost immediately, contracts were let for three buildings to be constructed.

One building, to be used as a tavern, was to be built by Charles and Joe Cates, and W.W. Brady. Young George Stephens was hired to build the second, while Will and Tom Jennings were given the work of constructing a two-story building. With the completion of these three structures other buildings were begun, surely Mr. Stephens was involved.

With the new village of Taylorsville taking shape, more settlers began to move into the county.

Yet, the new citizens of Taylorsville were on the exact fringe of civilization. To the northeast was the community of Gainesville. To the east several miles was Denton, and then there was Dallas with perhaps 500 in population. South, approximately thirty-five miles was the small community of Fort Worth where settlers were building around the old fort abandoned by the Army in September, 1853.

To the west, seventy-five miles away, stood Fort Belknap where was stationed U.S. infantry and a portion of the famed 2<sup>nd</sup> Dragoons, of little or no use to the citizens of Wise County because of the distance. To the north were only a few brave settlers. Again, to the west, some homesteaders and a few cattlemen were moving into what would be Jack and Young Counties. Thus Taylorsville, as small as it was, was the last settlement on the frontier. Travel north or west, was to go into the uncharted wilds and lands of the Kiowa and Comanche.

As more frontiersmen and their families moved into the above named counties, they would select a piece of land, clear it, and build a small log cabin to live in. They would have a few horses for livelihood and travel, and perhaps a few cows. Out on the grassy prairies, cattle raisers would have large amounts of cattle and horses. This soon became to great a temptation to the "wild" Indians roaming on the plains of western Texas. Raiding parties began making fast raids, usually at night, gathering up sizable herds of cattle and horses and leaving the area before the remote settlers and ranchers could do any thing. Farmers who used oxen for plowing would wake in the morning to find their oxen dead from spear or arrow wounds. Many times these brave settlers would fort-up in their cabins at night listening as these raiders carried off their livestock, hoping and praying the Indians would not attack the cabin. At dawn they would give thanks that their family had survived. Many suspected that the "tame" Indians out on the reservations in Young County were committing some of the raids.

With the increasing raids of depredation and sometimes murder, the citizens began to form small groups of "militia" whereby on word of a raid or observation of Indians coming into the area, men would stop what they were doing and gather at prearranged points. From there, they would ride and try to confront the raiding party. In these militia units young George Stephens would soon exhibit his extreme bravery and his ability to command and lead other men.

Riding with Stephens and other men would be the ever present Jennings brothers. Clifford Cates wrote that "There was never a fight or a chase, never a night's sentinel, but one or both of the Jennings' were concerned therein. Both were close companions of Captain George Stevens in his many forays with the human beasts they preyed upon the people of Wise County." Strangely, although Mr. Stephens would almost continually serve his County and State, there is no record of his buying any land until 1872. During these years, he with his family perhaps rented a place in town, or most likely lived with the Jennings on their place, north a few miles from town.

In 1856, a boy, named Pierce was added to the Stephens family.

By the fall of 1856, the first Baptist church in the county was organized at the home of Sam Perrin, the Jennings family with George and Martha Ann becoming charter members.

In 1858 Martha presented George another son that they named William. At Austin, with the urging of several Wise County citizens, the State legislature on January 7, 1858 renamed the growing Taylorsville in Wise County to the name of Decatur.

Also, by 1858, Indian raids across the northern part of the state were becoming numerous and deadly. As citizens were killed in Young, Jack, Wise and other counties, the settlers became enraged and with no one to blame, the atrocities were laid at the doorstep of the Government agency Indians.

With the massacre of the Mason and Cameron families a few miles northwest of present Jacksboro, the settlers had enough. Word was soon sent out to several counties for a gathering of armed men to attack the reservation and drive out or kill as many Indians as possible. Mr. Stephens, now developing into an Indian fighter, surely answered the call. By the middle of May, 1859, men from as many as fifteen counties had gathered on a creek near the intersection of Jack, Young, and Palo Pinto Counties. It is reported that there were as many as 250 men in attendance. As the men were organizing and electing their leaders, their encampment was discovered by a few agency Indians while out hunting.

Word was sent back to the reservation, where the occupants quickly set up

fortifications and breastworks while an agent sent a messenger to Fort Belknap for Army reinforcements to protect the Indians.

On the morning of May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1859 the assembled settlers mounted and rode out for the reservation some four or five miles away. Arriving, the men found themselves confronted by Army troops lined up and blocking their path. An Army spokesman rode forward and demanded to know what this large assembly of armed men was doing, coming on a U.S. Government agency? It was declared that they were there to punish the Indians who were responsible for the horrid crimes committed; whereupon the Army Officer announced that the Troops were here to protect the agency Indians. After some heated debate and banter, for unknown reasons, the Army soldiers allowed the men through, but stood "at the ready" nearby. It might be guessed that the Troops had been given orders not to fire on United States citizens unless it became apparent that the Indians could not protect themselves, whereupon the Army would enter the fight to restore order, and hopefully peace.

The determined settlers began their attack only to find the Indians prepared, and ready to defend their selves, blockaded in the buildings and at other points. Beginning slowly, the combat became all out, mostly at long range. By late afternoon, there were only a few dead and wounded on each side and the attack force realized they could not dislodge the Indians from their fortifications. As night drew near the men slowly began to withdraw and ride away for home.

Even though the men had been very unsuccessful, their action brought the reservation problem to be considered by Government officials. It was quickly realized that the agency Indians and the surrounding white settlers could and would not co-exist. In 1860 the entire reservation population was gathered up and forcibly escorted by Infantry and Dragoons north across the Red River to new reservations located around Fort Sill in southern Indian Territory. With the "problem" Indians removed, the settlers of northern Texas assumed that any Indian found south of the Red River was hostile and was to be chased out or killed.

When word of this action spread, among the bands of Indians roaming out on the plains of west Texas, the Indians increased their raids of plunder and murder against the hated Texans.

As the 1850's was drawing to a close, George Stephens' life took a dark turn. He suddenly lost his beloved young wife Martha Ann. Cliff Cates in his Wise County history book states that she died in 1858 and that George would marry his second wife Nancy M. Buchanan sometime in 1860. This does not seem to agree with the Wise County 1860 census. In the census,

dated June 2, 1860, George Stephens is listed with his children, however, his wife, Martha is not listed. Also, a baby born in January of 1860, named James is listed with the Stephens family. Listed in the same census is the Catherine Buchanan (a widow) family living in the Cactus Hill area in the western part of Wise County. One of the children listed with Mrs. Buchanan is Nancy M., 20 years of age.

One must assume that Martha Ann gave birth to baby James in January 1860, but would die within three or four months, before the census was taken. The grieving widower, now with five young children to look after, found himself in a situation that few men are mentally and physically able to cope with. When and under what circumstances he met young Nancy Buchanan is unknown, but soon 30 year old George would take Nancy as his second wife.

By the end of 1860, years of political and economic differences between the northern industrial and southern agricultural States were coming to a head. With the outbreak of war in early 1861, Texas soon joined the other ten seceding southern States in forming the Confederacy. Wise County would give more than its share of sons to the conflict.

George Stephens, still trying to get his family back in order, assumed the leadership of a Wise County militia company. Composed of homesteaders and ranchers, this militia or minute-man company, of which there were several, served part time on scouts throughout the county whenever there was word of an Indian raid into the county. Only a few of the Companies would serve at any one time. All the northwest counties on the frontier had their own militia units. These militia units, aided by U.S. troops stationed at strategic locations from the Rio Grand River north to Fort Belknap, and also by State Rangers patrolling the area, had kept the Indian intrusion level to a manageable level.

With the War beginning, U.S. Troops were removed from Texas and the rest of the South, the Texas Government found itself in the dual position of furnishing men to the Southern Cause while also furnishing men to replace the departed Union soldiers along the State's northwestern frontier.

Later in the year (1861) with what seemed little co-operation between State forces on the frontier and local militia companies, the Texas State Legislature passed a bill to "Provide for the protection of the Frontier of the state of Texas" on December 21, 1861. This bill provided for the enlistment of local frontiersmen from Presidio County on the Rio Grand River to Montague County on the Red River. Ten Companies were to be formed, with the men to furnish their own horse and arms. Known as the "Frontier Regiment" these men were promised that should they enlist, they would



serve close to their home County and would not serve out of the state of Texas.

The State Governor soon selected the commanding officers for the new Regiment and the commanders were ordered to proceed to certain Counties to enlist at least 100 men for each company. Upon filling their required number, they were to immediately move their company out to locations along the leading edges of the frontier. Upon arriving, the company was to be divided into a squad of not less than 25 men with each group to be stationed not more than 25 miles apart.

Arriving in north Texas, Captain Allen Brunson began recruiting men, in March and April of 1862, for his assigned Company "A". Captain Brunson soon recruited 121 officers and men. Among the recruit list, is private George Stephens.

Mr. David Smith in "Frontier Defense in the Civil War" informs us that the Company moved out to Wichita County where part of the Company was posted in the northeastern part of the county, while the rest of the command was placed in the southern portion of Wichita County, both located close to the Big Wichita River. Not remaining long, the Company was moved more eastward, to Red River Station, located in Montague County.

The entire Regiment (some 1200 strong) was placed under the command of Colonel James M. Norris, which was soon to prove to be a bad choice. Col. Norris war plan was for the Regiment to be strung out in a roughly straight line, extending from the Rio Grand to the Red River, and wait for Indian raiders to intrude whereupon short scouting patrols would find the raider trail, allowing the main force of the company, or companies, to pounce on them. Within a short time raiding parties had learn how to pass through and be gone before the scouting patrols could summon help. The fast moving raiders would go into the interior of the State and do their dirty work before again passing between the company post and on to the freedom of the west Texas plains.

After the first six months of operation, with the Regiment only able to account for approximately twenty Indians killed and recovering a couple hundred livestock, and while costing the State Treasury far more than expected, Governor Lubbock made the decision to request the resignation of Col. Norris, who was losing the respect of his men.

The Regiment was then reorganized and renamed the "Mounted Regiment, Texas State Troops". In February, 1863, the Regiment was placed under the command of an Indian fighter, Col. James E. McCord. The Regiment was soon to show promise. Unlike Col. Norris old plan of hold the line and fight, Col. McCord issued a directive to his commanding officers to take the fight

to the enemy with long scouts by small detachments and sometimes with company size units out into the far reaches of the frontier to do combat where ever they might be found.

Col. McCord placed his four southern Companies under command of Major W.J. Alexander while placing his northern force of six Companies under the command of, perhaps the greatest Indian fighter at that time, Lt. Col. James Barry. Known as "Buck", he proved to be the perfect man for the job.

As for George Stephens, Late in 1862, his new wife Nancy gave birth to a baby girl which they named Mary, and in late 1863 another daughter, Sarah was born.

Meanwhile, during the reorganization of the Regiment, Company "A" was re-designated as Company "C", and placed under the command of Captain Joseph Ward. Also at about this time, with the State Treasury growing slim, the Frontier Regiment was transferred to the Confederate Government, but, was allowed to continue serving on the Texas frontier. The Regiment became known as the "Texas 46<sup>th</sup> Calvary".

Apparently at about this time, for unknown reason, George Stephens made the decision to change his last name to "Stevens", thus he is listed in the muster roll of Company "C" as George Stevens, now promoted to 3<sup>rd</sup> corporal of the company. He would use the name Stevens the rest of his life. Col. Barry's plan of seeking the enemy soon began to prove fruitful, as over the next four months, more Indians were killed and more livestock recovered than the entire Regiment had shown since its inception. Yet, with its good record of accomplishments, Indians raids were still slipping through.

A second line of defense was the local militia units throughout the northwestern counties. Still, the Kiowa and the Comanche came off the west Texas plains, and also, some from the reservations across the Red River, to steal and kill throughout the northwestern counties.

Col. Barry's command, covering the area from Fort Belknap in Young County to the Red River, continued to take the fight to the Indians, through expeditions and patrols.

During the fall of 1864 Barry's command was given orders to assist in recovery of deserters. Back "East", as the War began to turn against the South, some soldiers, not wanting to die in what now seemed as a losing cause, deserted their companies and "lit out". Many came to northern Texas, hiding out in the woods or with sympathetic families. As these men came into the area, they began to congregate together in the woods for mutual protection from the authorities. These men knew that if caught, they at the best would be sent back to their commands or, as deserters, they might be hanged or shot.

In all probability, Company "C", now commanded by Captain S.G. Thompson and still composed of men from Wise and surrounding counties, and being familiar with the area, was used to make raids on these desperate men, in which many were captured or shot, the captured were turned over to the proper authorities for legal action.

By the middle of 1865, the War was lost.

On May 27<sup>th</sup> 1865 Colonel Barry issued to his officers Special Order #39: "Sirs, In the confused state of affairs I know not what to do in justice to all belonging to my Command than to order you to disband the Troops under your Command at once. And as they have not drawn any pay for fifteen months it is nothing more than due them than to make an equal distribution among them of all public property you have, allowing each Company to retain their Company property."

Now released from service, George Stevens perhaps rode with other men back to Decatur.

With the War now over, the beaten southern States were occupied by U.S Troops while its citizens were placed under strict "reconstruction" rules and regulations.

Any southerner who had actively fought against the Union was not allowed to vote or hold any public office.

Fearing another possible uprising of undefeated southern soldiers, one regulation was passed which directly affected the safety of Texas citizens. This regulation required that the original Confederate state governments would not be allowed to organize and/or arm any Troops within its State. All military would be supplied by the Federal Government.

This left the entire State of Texas with no organized force to protect its citizens from the murderous raids hard hitting the State. This forced the counties to resort to the pre-War use of Militia units.

In Wise County, George Stevens would command one of these militia detachments.

Within the year 4000 U.S. Troops were sent to Texas, however almost all were stationed in the interior of the State to protect the now free Black population and to see that the unsavory reconstruction laws passed by the Republican controlled State Government were enforced. Few Troops were placed along the frontier where they were desperately needed.

Suffering terribly, several counties began to petition the State Government for military relief. Passing these petitions on to the Military District headquarters in New Orleans, it was soon followed by a small detachment of U.S. Cavalry being sent to the little village, Jacksboro, located in Jack County.

By 1867, as more Troops arrived, a Fort was authorized and constructed just to the south of the village. Due to the poor quality of the soldiers and poorer quality of their horses, three or four years would pass before the Fort personnel could take an active part in the defense of the frontier.

(In the first recorded mention of George Stevens, in the County Clerks office, we find where he buys some branded range cattle on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1868.)

Over the next few years George Stevens besides taking care of his family, would continue being a guardian of his neighbors throughout the county against the raiding Kiowa and Comanche.

In 1869, Nancy gave birth to her third child (George's eighth) which was given the name Martha. George may have named this child in memory of his first wife.

On June 9, 1869, by special order of the Military District Commander, Stevens was appointed Sheriff of Wise County serving out the term of the last appointed Sheriff. The following December, Mr. Stevens, by popular vote, was elected to serve as Sheriff until December 2, 1873.

Also, in 1869, the United States Government relented to the sorrowful petitions of harassed Texas citizens by allowing the State Government to form and arm State Troops for protection along the frontier. Newly elected Governor Edmund Davis at once set in motion a bill to form six Companies of Rangers to be placed along the western frontier.

In San Antonio, a Company of fifty-two men was signed up from the surrounding Counties, and given the designation of Company "F" under the command of Captain D.P. Baker. All the men were required to furnish their own horse and six-shooting pistol. The State provided the men with new Winchester 44 cal. rim-fire repeating rifles. These rifles could carry 13 rounds when fully loaded.

The entire Battalion was officially known as the "Frontier Forces".

After organization, Company "F" moved out to its assigned area, the western portion of Wise County. After arriving on December 19<sup>th</sup> 1870, the Company made permanent camp a few miles west of present Alvord. For several months this Command fought and chased to elusive raiders, doing a very good service for the frontiersmen.

Within a year the almost bankrupt State Treasury found that it could not sustain the Frontier Forces. The Command was recalled back to Austin where they were disbanded. Although the State, which had been nearly bankrupt since the Civil War, could not keep the Frontier Forces in service, the structure and requirements were found to work quite well, this same format would be followed three years later with the formation of what would

be called the "Frontier Battalion".

In the early 1870's the State began to pay county militia units for time spent while on active duty.

Stevens, though still holding office as Sheriff also continued to command his Militia unit know as "Company "B" Wise County Minute Men". A few of his Militia call-up's, listed in State files, are :

September 2<sup>nd</sup> to November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1872

December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1872 to January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1873

September 1<sup>st</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup> 1873

One of Mr. Stevens many fights with the red-man is described by Clifford Cates and validated by B.B. Paddock in "History and Biographical Record of North and West Texas". It seems that around the first of August, 1873, a small band of Indians was observed sneaking around in Wise County. Being informed, Sheriff Stevens gathered together eight trusted men and set out trailing the little band as they moved northwest out of the county. After trailing approximately seventy- five miles, on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, the trailers were about ready to turn back for home when they suddenly caught up with the retreating Indians near Buffalo Springs in Clay County, only to find in horror that they had been joined by something like one hundred others leaving Stevens and his men in a very precarious position.

The men, observing close by, a large hill containing a ravine covered by a grove of trees, spurred their horses and raced to the ravine and dismounted. Seeing the movement by the white men immediately charged after them. Being repulsed, this large body of red men then made a series of charges and then retreating to regroup and planning how to get to the surrounded men. During these assaults, Stevens, ever exposing himself to gunfire, was wounded in the hip and one hand. As each attack drew nearer their position, the desperate men, realizing that they had no chance if they stayed in the ravine devised a plan to escape. When the attacking force retreated to regroup and plan their new charge, the men leaving their horses and half carrying the wounded Stevens crept out of the ravine and through the trees and made their escape. The red warriors, perhaps finding the horses in the ravine did not chose to follow the white men.

During this period, Stevens, having accumulated some wealth, bought two parcels of land approximately seven mile northwest of Decatur in what was known as the Flat Rock area. One parcel contained 160 acres while the adjoining parcel contained 22 acres. On this parcel, already stood a home, and probably Mr. Stevens and family soon moved into this home.

In November, 1873 Lt. Stevens was given special authority by the State to enlist a full Company (74 total Officers and men) to be known as CO. "B"

Frontier Rangers. They were in service from the 26th day of November through March of 1874. The Company of Frontier Rangers was then disbanded. However, in just a few days the men were re-enlisted into State service as Rangers in the newly formed Company "B" Frontier Battalion, Commanded by George Stevens, now, with the new rank of Captain. By the year 1873 Texas had been allowed back into the United States with all its own elected Government and allowed to pursue its own destiny.

The States new freely elected Governor, Richard Coke, entered office in January, 1874, and heeding the cries of the embattled citizens from the Frontier for help, was determined to give aid. Soon he had convinced the Legislature to authorize the formation of a Ranger force designed after the formerly known Frontier Force of 1871. This new force would also be of six Companies and led by hand picked Captains, and Commanded by another hand picked man with the rank of Major and answerable to only the State Adjutant General and through him to the Governor. John B. Jones, an ex-Civil War officer and proven leader of men was appointed Major of the Battalion. A better choice could not have been found.

This new Battalion, unlike previous State formed Forces, was also given legal power to make arrest and the support of State law enforcement Officers in apprehending those who would be lawbreakers.

The men of the Battalion, besides having to supply their own horse and six-shooter pistol, could buy from the State a Sharps 50 cal. Single shot carbine, for which all ammunition would be supplied by the State, free of charge.

For his Officers, in the new Company "B", Captain Stevens appointed S.G. McGarrah as 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, and as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, Ira Long, a man who had fought in the War and had shown great promise in Stevens's militia units.

With his Company now organized, Captain Stevens led his command to the western part of Young County, where a base-camp was established. With the camp established, the Captain then began, over the next few weeks, sending out patrols throughout the surrounding area. After a few days, one patrol led by a sergeant had an encounter lasting several hours with a hostile band in the northwestern part of Young County.

In early July, 1874, Major Jones, stationed in Austin, began a tour to see how his new Battalion was progressing. Beginning with the first southernmost Company, he rode north visiting each Company in turn. As he visited, Major Jones would take a few men from each Company to act as an escort as he drew nearer to the hostile northwestern part of the frontier counties.

By late afternoon of Friday, July 10, the Jones command rode into Captain Stevens camp-site where he was soon appraised that approximately half of

the company was out on an extended patrol.

Early Sunday morning July 12, a fresh trail of an incoming war-party of approximately fifty warriors was discovered. (This was a Kiowa war-party which had slipped off the Reservation located at Fort Sill in Indian Territory)

Leaving fourteen men to protect the camp, Major Jones, with part of his escort, and Captain Stevens leading the remainder of his Company, the command set out at a rapid pace trailing the war-party. The Command, composed of a total of 36 men, believed that they were an even match against the Indians.

After following the large trail for a few hours, Jones's Command had just crossed over into Jack County when they entered the south end a valley perhaps two miles across and extending several miles north. This valley, grass covered and surrounded by a low range of tree covered mountains, was known as Lost valley.

Entering the valley around noon on a very hot day, the Rangers observed that the Indian trail broke up into several groups moving north up the little valley. Jones, believing his force had been seen split his command into three sections and began a charge up the valley, expecting to commence battle with the warriors at any moment. After riding perhaps two miles and nearing Cameron Creek, the right hand section of the Command sighted, east across the valley near a mountain range, two Indians walking and leading their horses.

The little group of Rangers put spurs to their horses and raced across the valley toward the two warriors. As they drew near, suddenly the Rangers met a charge of screaming, shooting mob of over a hundred Indians, coming out of the tree line at the base of the mountain. Unknown to the Ranger command, the party that they were trailing had been joined by a much larger group of Comanche which had been sweeping the northern part of Jack County.

Now began, what local history would call the "Lost Valley Fight".

The badly outnumbered Rangers fell back northwest approximately three hundred yards where they were soon joined by the rest of the Ranger force. Using their pistols and big 50 cal. Sharps carbines, they were able to reform their command as the Indians moved back and forth slowly beginning to encircle the men. After a period of battle one of the men was shot in the shoulder whereby Captain Stevens warned Major Jones that they had better soon get to a more protective location as the larger Indian party was beginning to trap the men out in the open.

Observing a weaker area in the Indians lines to the south, the Rangers

charged south, pushing the Indians ahead of them while being chased by the remaining Indian warriors behind. After racing approximately a mile, the warriors in the lead, came upon two bolder covered hills, they dismounted and began to climb the two hills which were perhaps fifty feet in height. As the Ranger force galloped near, an Indian brave dropped to one knee and fire, wounding one man. As another Ranger drew near, the warrior fired again, hitting and killing the young Ranger. Seeing this, the Major ordered his command to fall back to a ravine located about two hundred yards east of the hills. The men dismounted and scurried into the ravine. As the remaining Indians came up, they began taking positions on the hill and in the surrounding trees to the north and east of the command. At once a tremendous gun battle began, the Rangers being too far away for the Indians to use arrows. All afternoon the battle carried on, with the Major and Captain Stevens exhorting and directing their men to husband their ammunition and to make their shots count. By late evening, seeing that they could not dislodge the band of white men, the Indians slowly began to cease their fight and began to withdraw.

Observing this, and believing the Indian force would stay in the valley that night, Major Jones sent a messenger to Fort Richardson, some fifteen miles to the east, requesting aid so he could continue the fight the next morning. Once it was certain that the Indians had left the field, the command, taking a circular path to the east of the valley, traveling in the night, moved up to the north end of the valley to the ranch house of James Loving.

After the messenger had arrived at the Fort, two Companies of Cavalry were dispatched to Loving's Ranch, arriving sometime after midnight. Early the next morning the Rangers and the Troopers returned south down the valley to the site of the conflict. A diligent search of the valley and surrounding area was made, but no sign was found of the insurgents. The night was spent in the valley where the following morning the Troopers returned to Fort Richardson near Jacksboro. Captain Stevens led his worn out command to their camp-site, where ended the "Lost Valley Fight". The Rangers had lost two men killed and a few men wounded, while the casualties of the Indians was never properly determined as the Indians carried off their dead and wounded. This proved to be the last conflict where a large detachment of Rangers and a large group of Indian warriors would meet in contest on the northwestern frontier. The Redman would thereafter come in smaller parties where they could more easily avoid the Ranger patrols.

By the fall of 1874, the Treasury of the State was again in financial trouble and unable to support the entire Ranger Battalion. Governor Coke and his Adjutant General, not wanting to disband the Battalion now that the men



were doing a good job, conceived a plan to save a portion. The Captains, who were drawing the most pay, were dismissed from the force. Also, each Company's roster of enlisted men was reduced by about half. Once more, Captain Stevens, carrying a document showing his Honorable Discharge, left Young County for home. Replacing the departed Stevens was now 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Ira Long who would soon make a real name for himself in the Ranger service.

By the middle of 1875, Lieutenant Long was transferred to take command of a Company in the southern part of the State to combat a band of outlaws and gunmen. Needing his old company commander, Major Jones prevailed on Mr. Stevens to again take command of Company "B" out in Jack County. During this same time period, the Army now having strengthened its Posts and Forts throughout western Texas, New Mexico, and the Indian Territory, began multi-pronged Cavalry and Infantry attacks against the Indians, wherever they might be found out on the badlands of west Texas and up in the canyons of the Panhandle. By late 1875 almost all of the belligerent warriors in north Texas had been defeated and driven on to the Reservations around Fort Sill.

Lieutenant Stevens, having commanded his Company dutifully for six months, by late 1875, realizing that the frontier was now free of the Indian menace, resigned his position in the Battalion.

It wasn't long after he returned to Decatur that Mr. Stevens many friends throughout the county were urging him to again run for the position of Wise County Sheriff.

Once more for the third time, on February 15, 1876, Mr. Stevens took office, occupied the little rock Jail two blocks southeast of the Decatur "Square". By early 1876, Decatur was being transformed from the little village of just a few years before. The Square was now filled on all four sides by one and two story businesses, and in the center of the Square set a large two story wooden Court-house which had been constructed in the early 60's. Around the town, several log cabins were being replaced by homes constructed from sawed lumber. With its ever present saloons, Decatur also had Churches, a hotel, a few Doctors and Attorneys, a Stage-line running from Fort Worth, and scattered throughout the county were little one room School houses. Also, around the county would be found family farms and large cattle ranches, horses were also raised in abundance.

Decatur was developing into a fine little community.

While his Sheriff duties continued into 1878, Stevens would soon be involved in a shootout in southern Wise County.

By the end of the year 1877, Sam Bass, a twenty-six year old near-do-well

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