



THE NAMING OF PRESTON ROAD

Preston Road in Dallas County is traditionally believed to be named for William G. Preston. In the story, Col. William Gordon Cooke is said to have been assigned in 1839 by Secretary of War (Republic of Texas) to build a road from the Brazos River to the Red River to help protect settlers from Indian attacks. William Gilwater Preston, as the story continues, was put in command of this unit and established an outpost on the Red River. He would have been twenty-three at the time and his soldiers were tasked with building part of a road from Austin to the outpost, called Fort Preston. The former location of Preston, or Fort Preston, is now under the waters of Lake Texoma. Since William Preston's service in the Texas Army around 1840 is apparently not documented, it may not be possible to prove that this traditional story is factual, so the naming of this road will likely remain a mystery.

However, William Gilwater Preston did exist and what we know of him is as follows. He was born in 1817 to James Patton Preston (who was at that time serving as governor of Virginia) and Charlotte Rector Preston. William is listed in four federal census records. In 1850, he was noted to be a farmer living in Arkansas. In 1860, he was living in Dallas County and owning a farm of 600 acres. In 1870, he had moved further west to Palo Pinto County, still farming, and in 1880, he is living in Runnels County in West Texas with the same occupation. He was first married to Louisa E. Parker (1824 - 1855) with whom he had at least three children. In 1855, he married Sarah A. Cameron with whom he had at least nine children.

Military service: William is believed to have participated in the Mexican-American War in the late 1840s. He then served for a few months in 1858 as a Ranger in Runnels County. He also was a member of the 19th Tennessee Infantry during the Civil War. At some point during the Civil War, he was taken prisoner in Alabama.

While he and his second wife Sarah were residing in Dallas County, they were living in the same area as many of the Ledbetters, known to be early settlers in Dallas County. Another of our family history stories on this website notes that Nancy Adalin Preston, a daughter from William's first marriage, was married for a few years to Thomas Logan Ledbetter. The couple eventually separated and Nancy's later history is currently unknown. A son of William and Sarah, William Thomas Preston, remained in the area. A great grandson, Roy F. Preston, participated in a 90 mile trail ride in 1960 from Preston Bend on Lake Texoma to Dallas to commemorate the opening of the State Fair of Texas that year.

William G. Preston's exact burial place is unknown, but he was said to have received a land grant in western New Mexico for his service in the Mexican-American War and was living near Lordsburg when he died in 1888. Sarah returned to Runnels County to live with her family. She survived William about 24 years. After William's death, she had married Jacob Knopfli, also a Civil War veteran who died around 1900. Sarah is believed to have died in Oklahoma around 1913.

Although hundreds and hundreds of North Texas locations incorporate the word Preston or some variation of it in their names, unless some new information is found, the origin of the name of Preston Road will remain a mystery.



Preston Road Historical Marker

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