

Texas Historical Commission Staff (CW), 8/11/76

Official Texas Historical Grave Marker
Gregg County (Order #4773)

Location: Grace Hill Cemetery, Longview

OLIVER H. PEGUES*
(NOVEMBER 27, 1847-MARCH 30, 1937)***

DESCENDANT OF A HUGUENOT FAMILY
WHO MIGRATED TO AMERICA IN 1736,
OLIVER H. PEGUES CAME TO TEXAS
WITH HIS PARENTS FROM HIS NATIVE
MISSISSIPPI IN 1850. HE MOVED TO
LONGVIEW IN 1871 AND BECAME THE
TOWN'S FIRST POSTMASTER, JAN. 27,
1871. PEGUES SERVED AS GREGG COUNTY
TREASURER, 1875-1900. A MERCHANT AND
BANKER, HE WAS AN EARLY LEADER
OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH.

HE WAS MARRIED FIRST TO HENRIE
DYER ^{*** **}(d. 1887) AND LATER TO EMMA
OVERTON ^{*** **}(1856-1929), AND HAD 8 CHILDREN. **

RECORDED - 1976***

*1/2 inch lettering
**3/8 inch lettering
***1/4 inch lettering

APPROVED

Truett Latimer

by Bob Watson
9-10-76

FILE COPY - DO NOT REMOVE

THE FIRST UNITED STATES POSTMASTER IN LONGVIEW:
O. H. PEGUES

by
W. Howard Bramlette

Oliver H. Pegues, Jr., was born November 27, 1847, in Marshall County, Mississippi, near the town of Holly Springs. He came to East Texas at the age of three, along with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Oliver H. Pegues, Sr., and brothers and sisters.

He was a descendant of Claudius Pegues, a Huguenot who emigrated from London and settled in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1736. A plaque dedicated to his memory hangs in the Old Huguenot Church in Charleston.¹ Land grants² to him from George II and George III can be seen in the home he built one mile east of the Pee Dee River when he moved inland to Cheraw about 1760. The 200-year-old Pegues Place home (the estate once comprised 20,000 acres) has been occupied by Pegueses to the present day.

Oliver H. Pegues, Sr., his father, was born in Marlborough District, South Carolina, May 20, 1807, and migrated to Holly Springs, Mississippi, where Oliver, Jr., and other children were born. Later he moved his family to Texas where he purchased fifty acres of land in Rusk County, December 31, 1850.³ He was a treasurer of Gregg County. He died February 12, 1875, and is buried along with his second wife in the Peatown Cemetery near the Gregg County airport.

¹Personal observation.

²Ibid.

³Rusk Co. Deeds, Book F, p. 591.

Not all of the Pegues family moved west from Marlborough County, South Carolina. And of those who moved to Holly Springs, Mississippi, not all moved on to Texas.

The University of Mississippi was chartered in 1844 and began its career in 1845. One of the original executive committee members who put this university into operation was Alexander H. Pegues, Esquire, who continued to serve on the Executive Board until 1860. Thomas E. B. Pegues, Esquire, succeeded him in 1861 and served on the Executive Committee until 1870. In 1870, Thomas E. B. Pegues became the secretary of the Board of Trustees of the University of Mississippi and continued in this capacity until 1875, giving that branch of the Pegues' family a record of thirty years in official service to the University.⁴

O. H. Pegues, Sr.'s first wife probably was buried in the Holly Springs, Mississippi, cemetery or in the Oxford, Mississippi, cemetery (where there are many prominent Pegues grave-markers). Oliver, Sr.'s children by his first wife were Phil, Albert, Claudius, Benjamin Franklin, and Ann. Albert and Claudius were both killed in the Civil War. Ann Pegues married a Mr. Whittington.

Pittman "Dock", Oliver, Jr., Mary, and Libby were the children of Oliver, Sr., and his second wife, Nancy A., who was born September 18, 1823, and died July 22, 1858. Mary Pegues married a Mr. Keener and then a Mr. Cloud. Libby Pegues married a Mr. Harlan.

O. H. Pegues, Jr., lived in Elderville, Peatown, and Longview, the latter from 1871 onward.

⁴University of Mississippi, Historical Catalogue, pp. 82, 84.

Mr. Pegues' brother, "Dock," purchased Lot 4 in Longview on May 29, 1872.⁵ He and Oliver, Jr., formed a partnership in the mercantile business, wholesale and retail.

The Longview Post Office was established in Upshur County the 27th of January, 1871, and there were three postmasters in Upshur before Gregg became a separate county. The first postmaster was Oliver H. Pegues, and the pay was one dollar monthly.⁶ When Oliver, Jr.'s father died, April 8, 1875, Oliver, Jr., succeeded him as Gregg County treasurer, a post he held for twenty-five years, until November 16, 1900.

In addition to the above business activities, "Mr. Oliver," as he was affectionately known, was a cotton buyer, livestock dealer (his registered brand was "66"), and Vice-President of the Citizens National Bank of Longview.

Oliver Pegues, Jr.'s first wife was Henrie Dyer, whom he married December 15, 1870, in Shreveport, Louisiana. She died October 28, 1887, in Longview. Her children were: Cora (Hamilton), born, October 30, 1872, and died, December 27, 1902; Claude, born, July 5, 1874, deceased; Eugene, born, July 5, 1877, deceased; and Olive (Coupland), born, October 14, 1885, and died, June 12, 1954.

He married Emma Overton of Overton, Texas, May 7, 1890. She was born May 7, 1856, in Overton, and died November 10, 1929, in Longview. Her father, Colonel John Franklin Overton, was the man for whom Overton, Texas, was named. By Emma, his second wife, Oliver's children were: Ione (Bramlette),

⁵Upshur County Deeds, Book P, p. 256. Gregg Co. was cut from Upshur Co. in 1873.

⁶Letter from Grover C. Ramsey, Austin, to Mrs. Paul Belding, Longview, September 30, 1961.

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born, March 6, 1891; Varina (Neilon), born, January 30, 1893; Allise (Coleman), born, August 9, 1894; and Albert, born, November 21, 1897, and died, February 1, 1956.

In his early years, Mr. Pegues was a Methodist. After a period of assiduous reading of the Bible, he became convinced that he should become a Baptist. He was an early leader and deacon in the First Baptist Church in Longview.

His large personal library contained some of the best religious and classical volumes available in that day. Occasional "buying" trips to New York helped to keep him abreast of the world of the intellect as well as the world of commerce.

In 1896, his brother and partner, "Dock," felt impressed to devote his full time and energy to evangelistic preaching. This was a day when there was no monetary remuneration for such endeavors. Oliver, seeing the need for his brother to do what God called him to do, said, "You do the preaching. I will support both families." This he did. It was no small undertaking, since "Dock" had eight children and Oliver, himself, had seven children by that time. But Oliver never wavered in the support of his brother's family, while "Dock" traveled over Texas preaching, a career of winning converts and establishing churches that became recognized throughout the state. L. R. Scarborough, President of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, in his book With Christ After the Lost,⁷ acknowledged a debt of gratitude to "Dock" Pegues, "whose tireless zeal in going after the lost, as an untrained layman, fanned into flames the holy fires of evangelism in my soul."

⁷L. R. Scarborough, With Christ After the Lost (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1952), foreword.

Oliver Pegues' friends were legion in all walks of life. One was Governor Jim Hogg. Another was Governor Thomas M. Campbell, who as a lad, clerked in one of the two Pegues' stores. Prominent religious and civic leaders were guests in the Pegues' home.

Upon Mr. Pegues' death, the editor of The Baptist Standard, Texas Baptist's official publication, wrote: "He could always be counted as influential for the right side of any public or moral question. His hand was open for the poor and the promotion of the Master's cause. He carried his religion conscientiously into his business and would not keep any employee who acted otherwise in a business transaction. No citizen of Gregg County, or Texas, ever took a keener interest in the promotion of everything pertaining to the prosperity and well-being of the people."⁸

He was the soul of generosity. One story is indicative of his high standards and his relationships to people. When he retired from active business, many people owed him great sums of money for livestock purchased in the hard years preceding. These sums amounted to many thousands of dollars, no small fortune in East Texas in those days, prior to the discovery of oil.

After the discovery of oil, when some of his debtors became extremely affluent, one of his daughters chauffeured him to visit some of them, seeking to have them make good on bad debts. One man who owed him and who had already become rich, looked at his bill and said, "Mr. Pegues, this is outdated. You can't collect this." To which Mr. Pegues replied, "Mr. _____, I did not think that a man's word ever went out of date. Come on, Daughter, let us go."

⁸Baptist Standard (April 16, 1936), "A Noble Citizen Passes," p. 16.

The last years of his life, Mr. Pegues lived in the home of his daughter, Mrs. W. H. Bramlette, in Jacksonville (Cherokee County), Texas. He died there March 30, 1937, at 89 years of age, and is buried in Grace Hill Cemetery, Longview.

As Longview's first Postmaster, as Gregg County treasurer for twenty-five years, as a merchant in the mercantile, cotton, and livestock business, and as a banker, O. H. Pegues was an outstanding leader. His life encompassed the major period in the settling of East Texas, where he lived all but the first three of his 89 years. In addition, Mr. Pegues was one of the most prominent and best-loved citizens of Gregg County. Possessed of sterling character, he was a deacon in the First Baptist Church and a leader in religious and community affairs and the press for civic righteousness.

9. TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTION

PEGUES

Oliver H.
November 27, 1847
March 30, 1937

Emma Overton
May 7, 1856
November 10, 1929

The Leques-Overton family
cemetery plot is located in
Grace Hill Cemetery, within the
city limits of Longview, on Highway 80.

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10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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4. The Longview Sunday News-Journal: July 3, 1960,
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12. Upshur Co. Deeds, Book P.
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14. Letter to Mrs. Paul Belding, Longview, from Grover C. Ramsey, Austin,
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