



18" x 28" marker

*ROCKWALL FARM

LARGE COLONIAL HOME BUILT 50
YARDS NORTH, 1854. OVERNIGHT STOP
ON WM. T. BROOKS' STAGECOACH LINE
FROM MONROE, LA., TO TYLER. FROM
HERE, MAIL WENT TO EARPVILLE, A
SITE NOW IN LONGVIEW.

SLAVES HEWED LUMBER, MADE THE
CHIMNEY BRICKS FROM TREES AND
CLAY ON THE PLACE. THE FIRST
FLOOR PARTITIONS FOLDED AWAY
TO MAKE BIG BALLROOM. THE BLACK
WALNUT COFFIN BUILT FOR HOUSE
OWNER JOHN HARRIS WAS FAVORED
TABLE FOR POKER UPSTAIRS.

LAST OWNERS, J. ROY SPARKMAN
AND JACK CASTLEBERRY FAMILIES,
RESTORED, OPENED TO VISITORS.

HOUSE BURNED IN 1952.

suggested inscription

ESTATE of
J. JACK CASTLEBERRY
Box 964
Longview, Texas

Dear John Ben,

Thank you for your personal interest in Rockwall Farm. Of course our love for it is very strong.

I am enclosing some rough (very rough) copies of material I find at hand; it gives more little anecdotes and traditions as well as some facts about the old place.

Daddy and Mama Ruth keep up the old tradition of having the square dances for the old timers and old fiddlers and for many, many years after Jack and I moved into it we opened it to the public annually and many times more than five hundred visitors would call in a day. We always dressed our colored girls in calico dresses with scarves tied on their heads and they served ginger cookies and cold buttermilk from a wooden churn to the guests. This on the brick floored back porch.

Daddy purchased the house and land Dec. 5, 1912, according to the abstract and we immediately got busy restoring it and making it "pretty" again. A negro family had ended up with it and you can imagine how it looked.

I think my copies clear up the route of the stage line, a number of dates, and I hope some unique construction features. I know also that the brick for the chimneys and foundation were made of clay on the hill and all lumber from trees on the place. We could never get negro help to stay after dark as they were confident that the place was "hanted".

Best regards to you and all of the little Sheppards or aren't they big Sheppards now?

Pondly,

Castleberry

Let me see what you compose before you submit it I might have some little something more or less.

A strange development in re Gen. Gregg. My great grandfather Capt. Newton N. Gober see next page.

Glad to hear of you for a living

ESTATE of
J. JACK CASTLEBERRY
Box 964
Longview, Texas

The stagecoach line which had the overnight stop here at Rockwall Farm was owned and operated by a great-grandfather of Mrs. Castleberry, Mr. William Thomas Brooks of Shreveport, La. and Jefferson, Texas. He owned a chain of hotels called "The Brooks Houses" in Monroe and Shreveport, La. and in Marshall, Jefferson and Tyler, Texas. The stage ran between these hotels making other stops along the way, carrying passengers and mail.

Before the founding of Longview, the mail was brought to a little post office called Earpville (sometimes misspelled Arpville) which was located where highway 80 now intersects Alpine St. in Longview. It is known that Earpville was an overnight stage stop as early as 1853.

Post Roads

Earpville, established as a townsite shortly prior to 1854 served through 1866 as a post office on stage lines carrying the public mail.

The post road system had earlier been authorized by the Congress of the Republic of Texas. An act of the eighth ~~seventh~~ Congress, approved Jan. 27, 1844, stipulated "Be it further enacted that mail running from Nacogdoches to Henderson in the county of Rusk, be continued to Marshall in the County of Harrison, weekly as other mails." It passed through Camden.

About 1854, the road was extended to Jefferson, where it cut west through Earpville, Winona and on to Tyler.* Earpville was also a passenger, stage and freight wagon terminal."

Ref: All of the above from Gregg County History compiled by the Longview Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1957.

*This evidently the route of the stage run by Wm. Thos. Brooks which stopped at Rockwall Farm. A.B.

ESTATE of
J. JACK CASTLEBERRY

Box 964

Longview, Texas

"I believe that the oldest home now standing in Gregg County is "Rockwall Farm". It is about half way between Longview and Greggton on Highway 80 and is the residence of Mr. and Mrs. J. Jack Castleberry. It is the former residence of Mrs. Castleberry's parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. Roy Sparkman. It was begun, the construction that is, in 1854 by a Mr. Harriss, and was built with slave labor. There is much history connected with this old home. It was a stage stop in the early days and tradition says that Jay Gould spent the night here. There are also tales of buried gold for which prowlers often did when the present owners would leave home for a week-end."

Ref: The above from a paper prepared for D.A.R. about 1935.

"ROCKWALL FARM"

Just west of Longview, high on a hill dominating many beautiful acres stood a stately Colonial-style house called 'Rockwall Farm'. It was built in 1854 ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ and was kept in good repair and remodeled many times before it burned in 1952.

Rockwall Farm was once an overnight stage stop, and the cry 'The Stage is in' was the signal for great activity. Word would be put out by the slaves and the old fiddlers and many of the neighbors would gather for a square dance on the main floor and card games upstairs. THE PARTITIONS OF THE LOWER FLOOR were huge folding doors which could be laid back to make a large ballroom.

All lumber was hand hewn by the slaves. The sills in the foundation were of 18 inch post oak mitered and pegged together with wooden pegs. The clap-board sidewalls were put on with hand-moulded nails. The floors were of six-inch edge-grain pine. The original kitchen was built of logs and was separated from the house by a covered passageway, as was common in plantation homes of that day.

The poker table most in use was the black walnut coffin built for the owner, Mr. Harris, which was built many years before he died. There was also a legend of buried treasure for which many holes were dug in vain through the years.

Later owners who did much for the preservation of this historic old house and the ones who opened it to the hundreds of sightseers were Mr. and Mrs. Roy Sparkman and their daughter and her husband Mr. and Mrs. Jack Castleberry.

ESTATE of
J. JACK CASTLEBERRY

Box 964

Longview, Texas

Gen. John Gregg-----

As you recall Gen. John Gregg was killed in action at Richmond. I have recently received from an elderly relative from my Great Grandfather Dr. Newton N. Gober a Confederate Captain. ~~This letter was written from Camp near Richmond.~~ Was he in command at Richmond because of death of out ranking officers including Gen. Gregg?

"Dr. Newton N. Gober, Capt. Co., F, Third Ga. Battalion of Sharpshooters, Wofford's Brigade, McLaw's Division, Longstreet's Corps, Lee's Army of No. Va. For a long time he was in command of the Third Ga. Battalion of Sharpshooters and was the senior Captain. Captain Simmons had been captured and was in prison and Maj. Devant had been transferred. Capt. Gober led the attack on the breastworks at Chancellorsville and was publicly commended before the Brigade by Gen. Wofford for bravery and gallantry. Capt. Gober was in command of the Vindette Line the night after the second day's big battle at Gettysburg when the ground was strewn with dead and wounded. 'We held the battlefield', he said and 'It rained next morning and looked stormy'. Captain Gober commanded the skirmish line of the "The Retreat from Richmond" the place of honor."

This from some publication but she did not give source.

She also enclosed a beautiful letter he wrote regarding death of his young wife. It has no historical value but was written "In camp near Richmond".

Longview Morning Journal

NEWS SERVICE OF AP AND UPI

LONGVIEW, TEXAS, SUNDAY, JULY 5, 1964

COMPLETE NEA FEATURE SERV

Rockwall Farm To Get State Marker Soon

A historical marker for the Rockwall Farm on Highway 80 near the Greggton area has been approved by the Texas State Historical Survey Committee.

The aluminum official historical marker measuring 18 inches by 28 inches will be placed there, according to Mrs. Paul B. Belding, chairman of the Gregg County Historical Survey Committee.

The marker is part of the program of the Texas State Historical Survey Committee to mark sites and landmarks of historical significance. This is in accordance with the laws passed by the last legislature which allow cities and counties to purchase historical markers. This marker and three others similar in size, a tree marker, and directional signs are offered for the counties and cities to purchase and erect, but this marker was purchased by the Beldings personally.

The marker relates that the house at Rockwall Farm which burned in 1852 was built of hand-made brick and hand-planed and hand-hewn lumber by slaves in 1854. The original owner was Thomas Harris. Lower partitions folded back to make one large room for entertaining. It was used as an early stage stop. Last owners were Mr. and Mrs. Roy Sparkman and Mrs. Jack Castleberry.



ROCKWALL FARM

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DANCING," "FIDDLERS' CONTESTS."
FAVORITE GAME TABLE UPSTAIRS
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