

# THE LONG HAUL



BY BILL RENFRO



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THE UNKNOWN STORY OF  
BRITTON DAWSON

AUGUST 2021

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# THIS BOOK

THIS BOOK IS A STORY OF AN ACTUAL HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF AN EVENT IN THE LIFE OF **BRITT DAWSON**, WHO ALONG WITH HIS FAMILY SETTLED IN **NAVARRO** COUNTY, JUST ABOUT TWO MILES FROM WHAT IS NOW THE TOWN OF **DAWSON, TEXAS**, FOR WHICH THE **DAWSON** FAMILY DONATED 100 ACRES OF LAND FOR THE BUILDING OF THE TOWN, WHICH BEARS THEIR NAME.

THE **DAWSON** FAMILY WAS A VERY LARGE FAMILY THAT CAME TO **AMERICA** FROM **ENGLAND** AND **IRELAND**. THE ACCOUNT OF THE **DAWSONS** HAS BEEN VERY WELL WRITTEN BY MANY HISTORIANS SUCH AS **CARL W. MATTHEWS**, THIS BOOK IS NOT A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT, BUT IS ABOUT PART OF THE HISTORY THAT I FIND IS MISSING AND SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE STORY.

IT IS WELL ESTABLISHED THAT **BRITT DAWSON** HAD FOUGHT IN THE **BATTLE OF SAN JACINTO**, AND HAD RECEIVED LARGE LAND GRANTS FOR HIS SERVICE. HIS STORY AFTER MOVING TO THE **DAWSON** AREA CLOSLEY RESEMBLES WHAT I SAW ON THE MOVIE SCREEN EACH SATURDAY NIGHT, LARGE LAND OWNERS WHO RAISED LARGE HERDS OF CATTLE, FOUGHT WITH RUSTLERS AND INDIANS , WELL, YOU KNOW THE STORY.

TO ME THE INTERESTING PART WHICH WAS UNTOLD, WAS THE OXEN DRAWN WAGONS SENT TO BRING BACK LUMBER TO BUILD "THE BIG HOUSE."



# THE TIMELINE

BRITT DAWSON WAS BORN IN ALABAMA -----1817

DAWSON AWARDED LAND GRANTS FOR HIS ----1836  
SERVICE IN THE BATTLE OF SAN JACINTO.

THE BATTLE CREEK MASSACRE -----1838

HIS WIFE DIES AND HE MOVES HIS CATTLE  
WEST LOOKING FOR A NEW START. -----1847

SETTLES IN NAVARRO COUNTY AND BUILDS  
A SMALL SHACK FOR HIS FAMILY. -----1848

SELECTS A CARPENTER TO BUILD  
THE LARGE HOUSE. -----1848

PLANS TRIP TO HOUSTON FOR THE  
CYPRESS WOOD THAT HE WOULD USE. -----1857

FINDING WAGONS, OXEN AND MEN TO  
MAKE THE JOURNEY. -----1857

MAKING “ THE BIG HAUL.” -----1857

WELCOME HOME ! -----1859

THE “BIG HOUSE” BUILT -----1858, 1859

DEATH OF BRITT DAWSON -----1905

CERTIFICATE OF BOARD OF VETERANS.

Austin, Texas, *August 11<sup>th</sup>* 1881.

This is to Certify, That we, the BOARD OF VETERANS appointed by the Governor under and by virtue of an act entitled "An act granting a land certificate of 1280 acres to each of the surviving soldiers of the Texas Revolution, and the surviving signers of the Declaration of Texas Independence, and to the surviving widows of such soldiers and signers, and to the widows of those who fell at the Dawson-Massacre, and to repeal an act approved April 26, 1879, entitled 'an act granting a land certificate of 640 acres to each of the indigent Veterans who were engaged in the struggle for Texas Independence prior to and at the battle of San Jacinto, enrolled under the act approved July 28, 1876,'" approved March 15, 1881, have carefully examined the application and vouchers filed by

*Dritton Dawson*

applicant for a land certificate

under said act. We are satisfied, from our own knowledge and the evidence in this case, that

*he*

rendered the service required in said

act; and we are further satisfied that the said

*Dritton Dawson*

applicant, is entitled under the provisions of said act to a land certificate for

*Two*

hundred and

*Eighty*

acres.

*R. W. Johnson*  
*John Hunter*  
*A. P. Brewster*

President.

Board of Veterans.





General Land Office,

AUSTIN, TEXAS May 13 1873.

I, Charles Lewis of Robertson County Texas, do hereby certify that I am the just & legal owner of one half of Hoodright Certificate No. 11 issued to Britton Dawson for B. League by the Board of Land Comm<sup>rs</sup> of Robertson Co. & that the other half thereof is owned by H. R. Heane & that I am fully authorized to control the same - Said Certificate has been located in conflict with the Geo. Antonio Nixon Eleven league Grant in said County - Charles Lewis

sworn & subscribed to before me the date above written

J. G. L. Keenan *J. G. L. Keenan*  
and Acting Com<sup>dr</sup> - Gen<sup>l</sup> Land Office

No. 9344

REPUBLIC OF TEXAS



320 Acres.

KNOW ALL MEN TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME,

That *Britton Dawson* having served faithfully and honorably for the Term of *Three* Months, from the *Twenty-fifth* day of *July* 1836 until the *Twenty-fifth* day of *November* 1836 and having been honorably discharged is entitled to *Three hundred and twenty* Acres Bounty Land, for which this is his CERTIFICATE.

And the said *Britton Dawson* is entitled to hold said Land, or to sell, alienate, convey and donate the same; and to exercise all rights of ownership over it.

In Testimony whereof, I have hereunto, set my Hand, at *Austin* this *Fourth* day of *June* 1840

Approved June 28th 1854

*Samuel S. Hillcutt*

*Asst Genl B. J. Archer*

SECRETARY OF WAR.

Intelligencer Office, Houston.

File 548. *Subscribed 10/188*

*LS 222 acres in Brown Co 1896*  
*288 1/2 " " " " " "*  
Travis 1st Class  
B 245. M 176

Britton Dawson

829 374 Sq Urs  
446 519 "  
1,040 935 "  
*3,274 1,440*

H. R. CERTIFICATE No. 61

*Survey for 829.374 Sq Urs file Oct. 7 80  
to H. R. Hearn & Chas Lewis apcs  
N. 341, Vol. 23.*

The endorsement on  
field notes. *1/2 pay*  
Oct. 25/80. *Chas Lewis*

Patent Three surveys to  
H. R. Hearn & Charles  
Lewis apcs. *Marsh.*  
Oct 25/80

*Three Surveys Patented  
Oct 25/80 Wallace*

*Three 7/4th ptd  
Nos 346-345-344-Vol 23.*

Mkd Pat Reg *over*  
Mgd. 17503

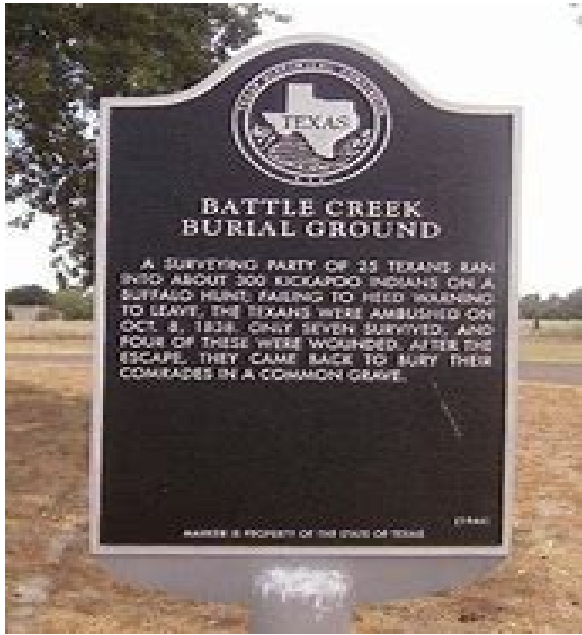


# THE STORY

AFTER A BOUNTY OF NAVARRO COUNTY, TEXAS, LAND GRANT FOR HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE BATTLE OF SAN JANCINTO, APRIL 21, 1836, **BRITT DAWSON** (1817) BECAME A CATTLE MAN. HE SETTLED HERE IN 1847. HE AND HIS GROWING FAMILY OCCUPIED A SMALL THREE ROOM CABIN UNTILL THEY DECIDED THAT THE LARGER THE FAMILY GOT, THE SMALLER THE HOUSE BECAME. IT WAS THEN THAT THEY BEGAN PLANS TO BUILD A LARGER HOUSE, WHICH WAS A GOOD IDEA SINCE HIS FAMILY FINALLY GREW TO 12 CHILDREN.

TO HELP DESIGN THE NEW HOUSE, WHILE HE WAS ALSO ENGAGED IN THE BUILDING OF BARNS AND OTHER OUTBUILDINGS, HE HIRED A **MR. BARGEN**. WHERE HE FOUND **MR. BARGEN** HAS YET TO BE KNOWN. **MR. BARGEN** IS RECORDED AS A CARPENTER ONLY, WITH NO ARCHITECTURAL EXPERIENCE. HOWEVER, NOT MANY PRIVATE HOMES IN THIS DAY DID REQUIRE AN ARCHITECT. BUT THE HOUSE THAT HE BUILT FOR **DAWSON**, WHILE BEING VERY LARGE, WAS A VERY MAGNIFIANT JOB OF MATERIAL USE AND STYLING. I HAD BEEN IN THE HOME AFTER IT WAS VERY OLD AND IN POOR CONDITION, BUT STILL A GRAND BUILDING OF ABOUT 6500 SQUARE FEET.

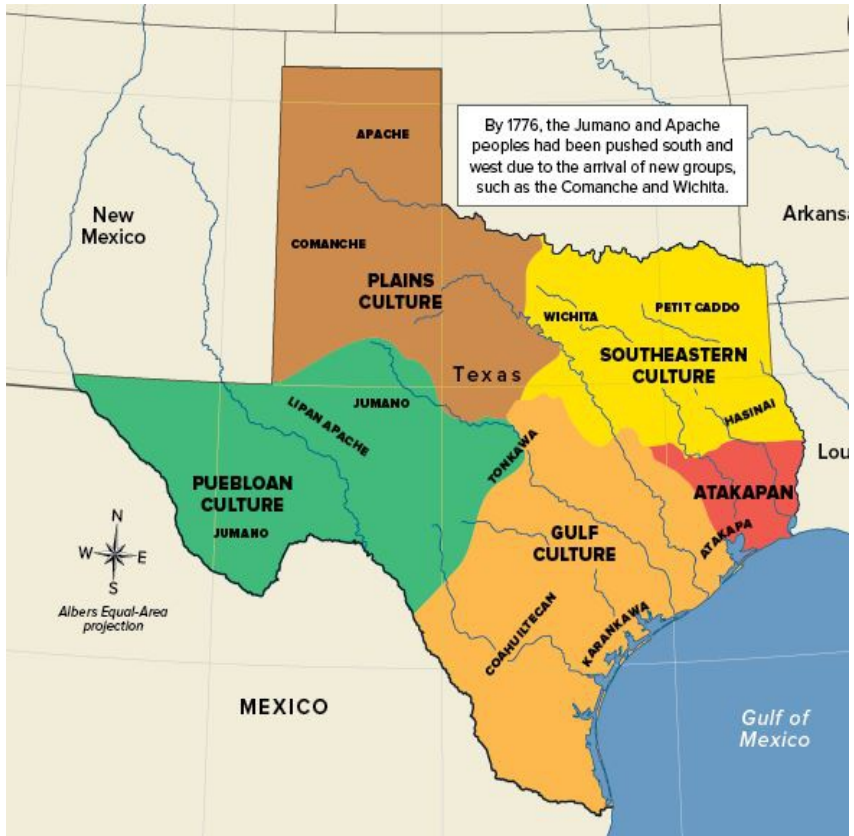
I AM SURE THAT THE PLANNING FOR THIS NEW HOUSE INCLUDED REQUIREMENTS OF MEN AND MATERIAL, WITH NO SMOOTH ROADS, AND TRAVEL THROUGH INDIAN TERRITORY WHEN THERE WERE INDIANS AROUND.



## BATTLE CREEK MEMORIAL

**BRITT DAWSON** HAD BUILT HIS FIRST HOME JUST ABOUT 2 MILES FROM **BATTLE CREEK**, WHERE 25 SURVEYORS HAD BEEN MASSACRED BY A BAND OF INDIANS OUT LOOKING FOR BUFFALO. WE KNOW FROM A STORY THAT **MRS. DAWSON** TOLD, THAT AFTER THE NEW HOUSE WAS BUILT, THAT ONE DAY WHILE HER HUSBAND AND PART OF THE FAMILY WERE AWAY, A BAND OF INDIANS HAD RIDDEN UP TO THE HOUSE, GOT OFF THEIR HORSES, WALKED UP THE FRONT STEPS INTO THE HOUSE, WALKED UP AND DOWN INSIDE AND CAME BACK DOWNSTAIRS AND LEFT WITHOUT SAYING A WORD OR HURTING ANYONE AND RODE OFF. THIS SHOWS THAT THERE WERE INDIANS STILL AROUND THE AREA.

THE DECISION TO USE OXEN FOR THE JOURNEY WAS A WISE ONE BECAUSE WHILE BEING SLOWER (ABOUT 10 MILES/DAY ) THAN HORSE DRIVEN WAGONS, THE OXEN SEEMED TO BE A BETTER CHOICE. THEY WERE MORE DEPENDABLE, LESS LIKELY TO RUN OFF, LESS LIKELY TO BE STOLEN BY THE INDIANS, AND THEY WOULD BE GOING THROUGH INDIAN TERRITORY. THEY WOULD BETTER ENDURE THE HARDSHIPS OF THE JOURNEY, AND WERE MORE LIKELY TO SURVIVE ON AVAILABLE VEGETATION. IF THEY STAMPEDED, THEY COULD BE EASILY RUN DOWN BY MEN ON HORSEBACK. THEY ALSO HAVE MORE STAMINA THAN THE HORSE OR MULE. THEY ALSO DID NOT HAVE TO BE GIVEN GRAIN TO EAT EACH DAY, WHICH WOULD REQUIRE ANOTHER WAGON JUST



## MAP OF TEXAS INDIAN TERRITORY



TO CARRY THE GRAIN THAT WOULD BE NEEDED EACH DAY. ALSO, OXEN DO NOT DO WELL IN HOT WEATHER AND THE DRIVE SHOULD START EARLY AND STOP AT NOON, WITH THE OXEN UNHOOKED AND ALLOWED TO GRAZE, DRINK AND REST, THEN MAYBE RESUME LATER IN THE DAY. THE HEAT COULD ALSO REQUIRE THAT THE DRIVE BEGIN IN THE SPRINGTIME BECAUSE IT COULD LAST UP TO 2 MONTHS.

IN 1857 A **MR. TOM LEE** AND HIS FAMILY HAD ARRIVED FROM **GEORGA**, AND SETTLED CLOSE TO THE **DAWSON** FAMILY. **TOM LEE** HAD THREE SONS , **JIM, JOHN AND BLAKE**. **DAWSON** HIRED **MR. LEE** AND HIS THREE SONS AND PICKED THE SON **JIM** TO BE ONE OF THE WAGON DRIVERS FOR THE TRIP TO **HOUSTON**. HE ALSO GOT **WILLIAM RISHEY** TO HELP WITH HIS GROWING HERD OF CATTLE.

I AM WRITING THIS STORY OF ONE PERSON'S ACCOUNT OF HIS VISIT TO THE OLD HOUSE, AND HOW AFTER ALL THOSE YEARS OF SERVICE, THE WINDOWS AND DOORS WOULD OPEN AND CLOSE AS IF THEY WERE NEW. IT BECAME APPARENT TO ME THAT WHAT I HAD THOUGHT OF AS THE BRINGING BACK OF ALL THE LUMBER TO BUILD THIS LARGE A HOUSE, HOW MANY WAGONS IT WOULD TAKE ETC., WAS A MYSTERY I COULD NOT FIGURE OUT ! IT THEN DAWNED ON ME THAT THIS STORY ABOUT THE WINDOWS AND DOORS MEANT THAT **BRITT** WAS SENDING ONLY FOR THE CYPRESS WOOD LUMBER TO FINISH THE OUTSIDE WINDOWS AND DOORS WITH, AND ALSO FOR THE COLUMNS WHICH WOULD LAST FOR MANY YEARS.



THIS IDEA MEANT AS FEW AS FIVE OR SIX WAGONS WOULD BE REQUIRED, ALONG WITH MANY FEWER MEN AND ANIMALS. THERE WAS STILL LEFT THE QUESTION OF HAVING MEN ON HORSEBACK TO GUARD THE TRAIN AND TO PROVIDE AN OUTFRIDER TO SEARCH AHEAD FOR WATER AND GRASS FOR THE ANIMALS EACH NIGHT. THERE WOULD ALSO HAVE TO BE A CHUCKWAGON TO PROVIDE FOOD FOR THE MEN. **DAWSON** WOULD ALSO HAVE TO PLAN FOR THESE THINGS, AND I AM SURE THAT HE DID.

I NOW BELIEVE THAT THE REASON THAT HE WAS SENDING WAGONS TO **HOUSTON**, WAS THAT THE CYPRESS WOOD THEY REQUIRED WAS BEING SHIPPED FROM **LOUISIANA** DOWN TO THE **GULF OF MEXICO** AND TO **GALVSTON**, THEN UP BUFFALO BAYOU, NOW CALLED THE **HOUSTON** SHIP CHANNEL, TO WHERE IT WAS DELIVERED FOR SALE. I BELIEVE THIS BECAUSE HE COULD HAVE GOTTEN LUMBER FROM THE **CORSICANA** AREA WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN ONLY ABOUT TWENTY MILES AWAY.

YOU CAN SEE FROM THE MAP A POSSIBLE ROUTE THAT THE WAGON TRAIN MIGHT HAVE TAKEN. THAT WOULD HAVE AVOIDED THE LARGER RIVERS AND STREAMS, BUT LEFT SEVERAL THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE ENCOUNTERED, WHICH COULD HAVE CAUSED THEM TROUBLE. IF THEY HAD COME TO A PLACE IN A SMALLER CREEK, WHETHER OR NOT THE WATER FLOW WAS UP, WHERE THE CREEK BOTTOM WAS DEEP, IT WOULD REQUIRE THAT THEY UNHOOK THE OXEN ,AND THEN TAKE THEM



## POSSIBLE ROUTE OF THE DAWSON WAGON TRAIN TO HOUSTON

TO THE OTHER SIDE, TIE LARGE ROPES OR CABLES ACROSS THE STREAM AND HOOK THE OXEN TO THE WAGON AND PULL IT ACROSS. NOT AN EASY TASK, BUT WHICH WOULD BE REQUIRED.

WITH ALL OF THE THINGS THAT WOULD BE NEEDED, I BELIEVE THAT THIS JOURNEY WOULD REQUIRE AT LEAST FIVE WEEKS AND A TRAVEL OF AT LEAST 450 MILES.

I HAVE YET TO FIND ANY STORY OR ACCOUNTING FOR THE TRIP, SO I MUST ASSUME THAT WHATEVER WAS ENCOUNTERED ALONG THE JOURNEY WAS TAKEN CARE OF AND THE TRIP WAS A SUCCESS, BUT I STILL THINK THAT WHAT DID HAPPEN DURING THE TRIP WOULD MAKE A GOOD MOVIE.

## THE LONG HAUL

THE WAGON TRAIN THAT WAS SENT TO **HOUSTON** FOR WOOD FOR THE HOUSE HAD ARRIVED EARLIER TODAY, AND **MR. DAWSON** HAD ORDERED ONE OF THE MANY CALVES BUTCHERED AND TO BE COOKED OVER WOOD FOR A FEAST TONIGHT TO CELEBRATE THE SAFE RETURN OF MEN AND LIVESTOCK FROM THE TRIP. THE MEN HAD SET UP THE COOKER NEARBY THE 3 ROOM SHACK WHERE THE **DAWSON** FAMILY NOW LIVED. WHEN DARK CAME AND WE HAD ALL GATHERED AROUND THE LARGE TABLE THAT HELD THE REMAINDER OF THE FEAST, **MR. DAWSON** SAID GRACE AND GAVE THANKS FOR THE SAFE RETURN OF ALL WHO HAD GONE ON THIS JOURNEY.

WE THEN GOT TO SEE THE FEAST BEFORE OUR VERY EYES. IT SEEMS THAT **MRS. DAWSON** HAD FOR DAYS COLLECTED THE VEGETABLES AND FRUIT ALONG WITH HER GREAT PIES AND OTHER DESERTS.

AFTER WE HAD EATEN OUR FILL, **MR. DAWSON** SAT US AROUND THE STILL LOW FIRE AND ASKED THAT WE TELL HIM AND THE FAMILY ABOUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED ON THE TRIP.

HE BEGAN WITH **JIM LEE**, WHO HE HAD SELECTED TO BE THE HEAD DRIVER. “WELL BOSS, THIS DRIVE WAS QUITE A NEW EXPERIENCE TO ME, BUT WHEN WE LEFT HERE AFTER ALL OUR WAGONS WERE LOADED AND THE CHUCK WAGON FILLED TO CAPACITY, WE TOOK THE FIRST TWO DAYS SLOW AND EASY, WHILE WE ALLOWED THE OXEN TO LEARN TO WORK TOGETHER AS A TEAM AND WE GOT TO KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THEM”.

“WE ONLY MADE ABOUT 10 MILES EACH OF THOSE TWO DAYS, BUT IT WAS WORTH IT. THE THIRD DAY ON, WE WERE ABLE TO MAKE CLOSE TO 15 MILES, SINCE THE WAGONS WERE NOT YET LOADED. BY THIS TIME ALL THE DRIVERS WERE WORKING GOOD WITH THEIR TEAMS AND HAD BEGUN TO GIVE EACH OF THEM THEIR OWN NAME. IT WAS AS IF WE WERE A FAMILY. I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR FINDING GOOD ANIMALS WHO HAD BEEN TRAINED BY SOMEONE ELSE, AND THE GOOD MEN YOU FOUND TO DRIVE THE OTHER 4 WAGONS,

THEY WERE MOST HELPFUL TO US GREENHORNS WHO HAD NEVER DONE THIS BEFORE. I EVEN FIND MYSELF SAYING GEE AND HAW IN MY SLEEP. IT IS SOMETHING I WILL NEVER FORGET, THANK YOU.”

“OK JAMES, WHAT IS YOUR STORY? **MR. DAWSON** ASKED.”

“WELL, MY STORY IS ABOUT THE SAME, ALL THE MEN GOT ALONG GOOD AND WE ALL LIKED EACH OTHER, EXCEPT WHEN WE LOST AT A POKER GAME. OUR TRIP TO **HOUSTON** WAS THE EASIEST, OF COURSE, WE COULD RIDE IN THE WAGON UNTIL WE COULD SIT NO LONGER, THEN WE WOULD GET OUTSIDE AND WALK ALONG SIDE OF THE OXEN FOR A WHILE. I FOUND THAT THE OXEN WERE EASIER TO HOOK TO THE WAGON AND TAKE CARE OF AT NIGHT. OUR OUTRIDER DID A GREAT JOB OF LOOKING AHEAD TO FIND THE BEST ROUTES TO HAVE GOOD GRASS FOR THE OXEN TO GRAZE ON EACH NIGHT, BUT WE SPENT SEVERAL NIGHTS IN DRY CAMP. OF COURSE WE HAD CARRIED ENOUGH WATER FOR THE MEN BUT NOT FOR THE ANIMALS. BUT WITH NO LOADS THEY COULD GO A DAY OR MORE WITHOUT WATER. OUR FIRST CONCERN WAS ALWAYS FOR THEM BECAUSE WITHOUT THEM THERE WOULD BE NO HAUL. THE COOK DID A GREAT JOB ALSO AND WE GAVE HIM A SPECIAL NAME, WHICH I CAN'T CALL OUT HERE, BUT HE DID A GOOD JOB IF YOU LIKE TO EAT THE SAME THINGS EVERY OTHER DAY. BUT MY FAVORITE WAS HIS CORNBREAD, MMM !!, JUST LIKE MOM USED TO MAKE. WHEN MY

STOMACH WAS FULL, I DIDN'T EVEN MIND WATCHING THE ANIMALS AT NIGHT. THEY MOSTLY GRAZED AT NIGHT BUT BECAUSE WE WERE DRIVING SLOW, WHEN WE WERE IN TALL GRASS THEY WOULD GRAZE AS WE MOVED ALONG. THIS BEING MY FIRST TRIP WITH OXEN, I FOUND THAT THEIR TEMPERAMENT HELPED ME BEGIN TO ENJOY THE JOURNEY.”

**MR. DAWSON** SPOKE UP, “WELL IT SEEMS YOU EACH HAD A GOOD EXPERENCE WITH THE ANIMALS AND YOUR FELLOW WORKERS, BUT WERE THERE ANY BAD PROBLEMS YOU HAD WITH THE WAGONS OR DRIVING CONDITIONS ?”.

**CHARLES** ANSWERED “WELL SIR, WE WERE ABLE TO GO BETWEEN THE LARGER RIVERS BUT THERE WERE A FEW SMALLER CREEKS THAT HAD NEVER BEEN CROSSED OVER BEFORE, THAT DID GIVE US A LITTLE PROBLEM CROSSING, BUT THE WAGONS THAT YOU HAD GOTTEN FOR US HAD THE WIDER WHEELS WHICH HELPED US TO BE ABLE TO GET ACROSS EASIER, BUT IN SOME, WE HAD TO SHOVEL SOME OF THE DIRT AWAY SO THAT THE WAGONS DIDN" T DRAG, BUT WITH A LITTLE SWEAT WE WERE ABLE TO GET ACROSS OK. OUR OUTRIDER DID A REALLY GREAT JOB OF DIRECTING US TO THE BEST LOCATION THAT WE WERE GOING, SOME TIMES WE HAD TO ZIG -ZAG OUR DRIVE TO GET TO THOSE PLACES, BUT IT WAS WORTH IT. WHEN WE LEFT HERE WE HAD HEADED WEST ACROSS THE BLACKLANDS, BUT AS WE NEARED THE HILLS OF TEHUACANA, WE HAD TO GO AROUND BECAUSE IT IS 60 SOME-ODD FEET HIGH AND WE DIDN'T



WANT TO SEE ANY INDIANS, ALTHOUGH THE **TEHUACANA** WERE FRIENDLY.. ( THEY LIVED THERE UNTIL THEY WERE KILLED BY OTHER INDIANS IN THE 1840'S ) YOU KNOW, THEY WEREN'T REALLY **TEHUACANA** INDIANS, THEY WERE A BRANCH OF THE COMANCHEES. THE WORD IS AN INDIAN ONE, BUT IT IS THE NAME THAT THEY GAVE THE HILL, WHICH MEANS "PLACE OF COOL WATERS" BECAUSE THE CREEK UP THERE IS FED BY A SPRING AND IT FLOWS DOWN INTO THE LAKE.

WE HAD TO GO AROUND THE HILL TOWARDS THE EAST BECAUSE IT WAS SO HIGH, AND THEN WE HAD TO WORK OUR WAY UP THE LOWER PARTS BECAUSE THE HILL IS OVER SIXTY SOME-ODD FEET HIGH. THAT WON'T BE A PROBLEM COMING BACK THOUGH !.

ONCE WE GOT AROUND THAT DANG HILL AND ONTO MORE LEVEL GROUND IT WASN'T THAT BAD, BUT MAKING NEW TRACKS IN A OPEN PRAIRIE, YOU'RE BOUND TO RUN INTO STUFF YOU DID'NT EXPECT. OUTSIDE OF THE FEW TIMES THE WAGON WHEEL DROPPED INTO A CHUG HOLE AND WE HAD TO GET THE GUYS WITH HORSES TO HELP PULL US OUT, WE DID PRETTY GOOD.

THE CLOSER WE GOT TO **HOUSTON**, THE MORE THE WAY HAD BEEN TRAVELED AND THAT HELPED US ALL. BUT WHEN WE GOT TO HOUSTON, WE FOUND THAT THE LUMBER COMPANY HAD MOVED SEVERAL MILES DOWN THE ROAD, AND IT TOOK US FOREVER TO FIND THAT NEW PLACE. IT SEEMS

THAT IT WAS CLOSER TO WHERE THAT KIND OF LUMBER IS BROUGHT IN FROM LOUSIANA, DOWN THE GULF TO **GALVESTON**, THEN UP THE HOUSTON SHIP CHANEL AS CLOSE AS THEY COULD GET IT, THEN BY WAGON OVER TO THE NEW LUMBERYARD. BUT WE WERE ABLE TO GET ALL LOADED PROPERLY, WITH THEIR HELP, AND WERE READY TO START BACK HOME THE NEXT DAY. YOU KNOW WE HAD TO LOOK AROUND A BIT 'CAUSE WE MIGHT NEVER BE BACK THAT WAY”.

TO THAT THE BOSS SAID A GOOD “OF COURSE”.

“THEN WE STARTED BACK WITH THE WAGONS LOADED. WE HAD TWO WAGONS FOR THE BOARD FOR THE WINDOWS AND DOORS , AND THREE WAGONS FOR THE BIGGER WHOLE TREES THAT WOULD BE USED FOR THE FRONT COLUMNS. THIS MADE THE JOURNEY A MUCH HARDER TRIP AND CAUSED US TO BUY EXTRA OXEN IN HOUSTON TO ADD TO THE STRAND WE ALREADY HAD ON THE THREE WAGONS THAT CARRIED THE LARGER LOAD. WE HAD TO FIND A WAY TO STACK THE LUMBER SO THAT THE WAGONS DIDN'T GET TOP HEAVY AND FALL OVER BECAUSE THE FEW MEN THAT WE HAD COULD NOT HAVE PICKED THEM UP AND RELOADED BY OURSELVES.”

“ DID YOU HAVE ANY TROUBLE WITH BANDITS OR INDIANS ON YOUR TRIP”, **DAWSON** ASKED.

“NO SIR, WE HAD SOME INDIANS THAT CAME UP CLOSE, AND SCARED MOST OF US TO DEATH, JUST OUT OF RIFLE FIRE BUT THEY DIDN'T COME CLOSE

TO US. AND I THINK THAT ANY BANDITS WHO MIGHT HAVE SAW US DIDN'T SEE ANY THING THEY WANTED. I AM GLAD THAT WE DID HAVE RIFLES.

ANY WAY, IT MADE ME FEEL BETTER. I ALSO THINK THAT THE FEW COWS YOU HAVE GIVEN TO THE INDIANS SINCE THE BUFFALO HAVE BEEN GETTING LESS AND LESS AND THEY NEEDED FOOD THAT MAYBE THEY HAD SENT THE WORD AROUND AND WE WERE GIVEN SAFE PASSAGE.”

“I ALSO THINK THAT THE THREE MEN WE HAD ON HORSEBACK,WHO WERE THERE TO DEFEND US IN CASE OF TROUBLE, HELPED KEEP THE BANDITS AWAY AND ALSO DID A GOOD JOB. THEY WERE ALWAYS A HELP WHEN WE NEEDED TO CROSS A CREEK OR HELP PULL US OUT OF A MUD HOLE”.

“I WANT TO THANK ALL YOU MEN FOR A GOOD AND SAFE TRIP FROM MYSELF AND EACH ONE OF MY FAMILY” THE BOSS CLOSED. “ALSO ALL OF YOU GET A GOOD NIGHTS SLEEP BECAUSE TOMORROW, WE START UNLOADING LUMBER.”





A PICTURE OF THE OLD  
“BIG HOUSE”

DATE OF THE PICTURE IS UNKNOWN

# THE BIG HOUSE

NOW THAT THE JOURNEY TO **HOUSTON** TO BRING BACK THE CYPRESS WOOD TO BE USED TO CONSTRUCT ALL THE OUTSIDE WINDOWS AND DOORS IS BACK AT HOME, WE WILL ASSUME THAT **MR. DAWSON** HAD ALREADY GOTTEN WHATEVER LUMBER AND OTHER THINGS THAT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO CONSTRUCT THE “BIG HOUSE”, AS THE **DAWSONS** CALLED IT, AND ALL THINGS WERE READY TO BEGIN. THE CARPENTER HAD BEEN SELECTED AND **BRITT** HAD GIVEN HIM TWO OR THREE MEN TO HELP WITH THE BUILDING, WHICH WOULD LAST FOR TWO YEARS AFTER IT WAS STARTED IN 1847.

HERE IS AN ACTUAL PICTURE OF THE BIG HOUSE AFTER IT HAD BEEN ABANDONED, FOR A REASON THAT WE HAVE YET TO DISCOVER . IT STILL SHOWS TO ONCE HAVE BEEN A FINE HOUSE, WELL BUILT, WITH TWO AND ONE-HALF FLOORS, 10 BEDROOMS, A LARGE LIVING AREA, A LARGE KITCHEN, AND A SERVANTS QUARTERS. THE TWO FRONT PORCHES MEASURED 50 FOOT WIDE BY 30 DEEP AND SUPPORTED BY 6 LARGE COLUMNS. THE HOME FAR EXCEEDED OTHER HOMES IN THE AREA. THE **DAWSON** FAMILY WAS SAID TO BE KIND AND CONSIDERATE AND WELL RESPECTED. IT IS ALSO SAID THAT MANY STRANGERS STOPPED BY THE HOUSE FOR A COOL DRINK OF WATER AND MAYBE SOME REST IN A LONG TRAVEL AND SOME MAY HAVE SPENT THE NIGHT WITH THE **DAWSONS**.



## THE BIG HOUSE

UNDER RESTORATION

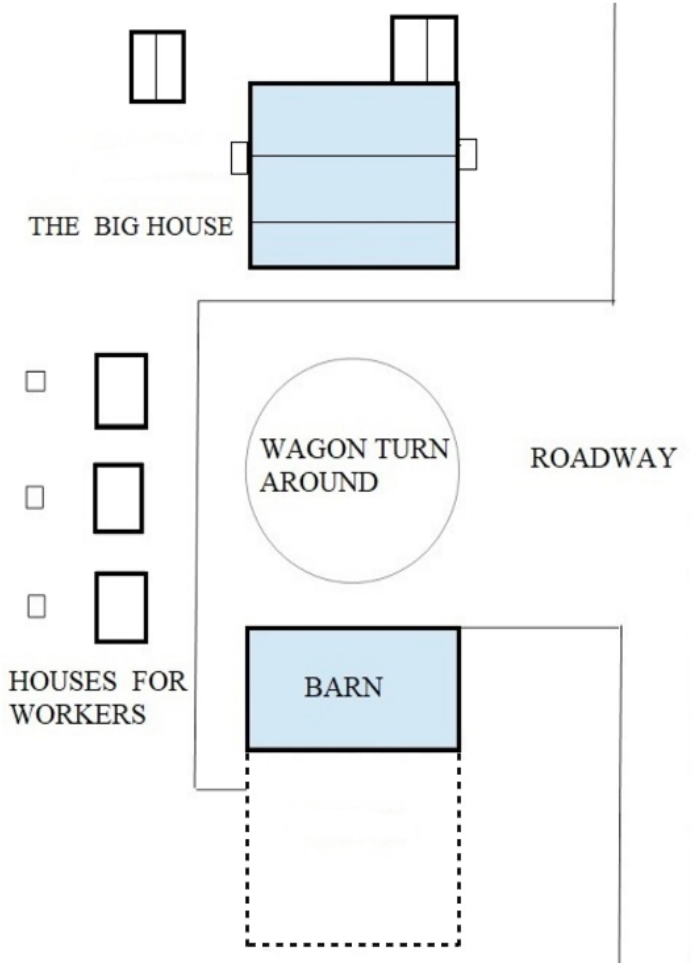
**BRITT DAWSON'S SON BRITTON C. DAWSON AND HIS WIFE HAD LIVED IN THE HOUSE UNTIL HIS DEATH IN 1907, AND HIS WIFE HAD CONTINUED TO LIVE THERE UNTIL SHE DIED IN 1935.**

WE DO NOT KNOW IF ANYONE LIVED THERE AFTER THAT, BUT DO NOT BELIEVE SO BECAUSE IT FELL INTO DISREPAIR FOR MANY YEARS.

THE HOUSE WAS PURCHASED IN ITS LATTER YEARS BY SOMEONE WITH AN EYE FOR QUALITY, AND RESTORATION BEGAN. AT THIS STAGE, WITH ITS MAGNIFICENCE BEING RESTORED, A FIRE BROKE OUT AND THE HISTORIC RELIC WAS BURNED TO THE GROUND.

THE GROUNDS THAT ONCE WERE THE STORY OF THOSE WHO BUILT THIS COUNTRY, NOW STAND VACANT AND WEEDS GROW WHERE HISTORY ONCE DID.





## THE GROUNDS



# THE GROUNDS

HAVING GROWN UP IN DAWSON, TEXAS, I HAVE DRIVEN FROM WHERE MY FAMILY LIVED IN THE COUNTRY, TO THE TOWN OF **DAWSON** MANY TIMES AND HAD BEEN INSIDE THE BIG HOUSE AND ON THE GROUNDS. HERE IS WHAT I REMEMBER ABOUT THE GROUNDS.

AT THE TIME THE HOUSE WAS BUILT, THE ROAD RAN BESIDE THE HOUSE. THERE WAS A LARGE SPACE BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND BARN, WHICH COULD BE USED TO DRIVE WAGONS OR STAGECOACH INSIDE AND HAVE ROOM TO TURN AROUND WITHOUT BLOCKING THE ROAD.

THE BARN WAS LARGE AND COULD HOLD SEVERAL HORSES OR OTHER ANIMALS. IT HAD A GENEROUS FENCED CORRAL TYPE AREA FOR THE ANIMALS TO BE OUTSIDE.

THE HOUSES SHOWN FOR WORKERS IS MY IDEA ONLY AND WERE NOT ACTUALLY SEEN ON THE GROUNDS. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT MR. **DAWSON** COULD HAVE CARRIED OUT SUCH A LARGE RANCH AND HOME WITHOUT HELP.





## THE LAND AND THE CATTLE

**BRITT DAWSON** WAS KNOWN TO OWN MANY ACRES OF LAND AND CATTLE, AND AS I WRITE THIS I AM REMINDED OF THE STORY THAT WAS WRITTEN EARLIER OF THE TIME THAT **MRS. DAWSON** WAS HOME IN THE NEW HOUSE, WHEN A GROUP OF INDIANS RODE UP, GOT OFF THEIR HORSES AND WENT INSIDE THE HOUSE, LOOKED IT OVER AND GOT BACK ON THEIR HORSES AND RODE AWAY WITHOUT HARMING HER OR TAKING ANYTHING. THIS MAKES ME THINK THAT THEY WERE INSIDE INDIAN TERRITORY, BUT THE INDIANS WERE NOT UNFRIENDLY TO THE **DAWSONS**. THIS LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THAT **BRITT DAWSON** KNEW THE INDIANS AND WAS POSSIBLY LETTING THEM TAKE A FEW CATTLE AS THEY NEEDED FOR FOOD. AFTER ALL HE HAD PLENTY.

IT IS RECORDED THAT IN 1886 **BRIT DAWSON'S** SONS SOLD 15,000 HEAD OF CATTLE TO A **MR. HUBBY** FOR \$7.00 PER COW, OR A TOTAL OF \$105,000 AND HAD AS MANY CATTLE LEFT OVER. IT WAS SAID THAT AT ONE TIME HE HAD THE LARGEST HERD IN ALL OF **NAVARRO COUNTY**.

NOT ONLY WOULD HE NEED LAND FOR THE CATTLE, BUT NO RANCHER CAN RAISE A HERD OF THAT SIZE WITHOUT RIDERS ON HORSEBACK TO KEEP THEM FROM BEING STOLEN OR RUNNING OFF. WE HAVE NOT FOUND AN ACCOUNT OF THIS ANYWHERE, NOR HAVE WE FOUND THE AMOUNT OF LAND THAT HE OWNED.



NOT ONLY THAT, BUT HE WOULD HAVE HAD TO PROVIDE STABLES, FOOD, BARNs AND CORRALS FOR KEEPING THE HORSES.

AT THIS POINT IN OUR STORY, WE HAVE NOT FOUND HOW MANY ACRES THAT HIS RANCH INCLUDED, WHERE THEY WERE LOCATED AND THE EXTENT OF THE RANCH LOCATION. THERE ARE A LOT OF UNANSWERED QUESTIONS TO THIS STORY, BUT WE HAVE LOCATED AN INDEX OF LAND GRANTS FROM THE HISTORICAL ARCHIVES OF THE **REPUBLIC OF TEXAS**, AND MAYBE CAN ANSWER SOME OF THE QUESTIONS.

WE DO KNOW THAT THE **DAWSON** FAMILY WAS LARGE AND HAD SETTLED IN MANY STATES WITH SOME OF HIS RELATIVES RECEIVING LAND GRANTS AS LARGE AS OVER 200,000 ACRES. TO SAY THAT THIS FAMILY WAS NOT INFLUENTIAL WOULD BE AN UNDERSTATEMENT.

**BRITT DAWSON** ACCUMULATED VAST HOLDINGS IN MANY PARTS OF MANY COUNTIES, BUT WE DO NOT KNOW HOW HE GOT THEM.





## LOCATION OF THE BRITT DAWSON “BIG HOUSE”

# THE EL DORADO RANCH

WHILE RESEARCHING DATA FOR MY LAST BOOK, I HAD BEEN SEARCHING TO FIND THE LOCATION OF THE **WILLIAMS ELDORADO RANCH**. I FOUND WHAT YOU SEE IN THE MAP TO THE LEFT, THE EXACT LOCATION AND EXTENT OF THE RANCH BECAUSE I HAD ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT I HAD BEEN BORN AND RAISED INSIDE THE OLD RANCH OF 1881.

I SEARCHED FOR IT'S LOCATION AND ALSO FROM WHOM THE RANCH BOUGHT THEIR LAND. IF YOU LOOK AT THE MAP YOU CAN SEE THAT THE OLD RANCH WAS ONLY ABOUT 5 MILES FROM THE **DAWSON HOUSE**. **BRITT DAWSON** HAD SETTLED IN THIS AREA ABOUT 30 YEARS BEFORE AND WITH HIS LARGE LAND GRANT, WOULD MORE THAN HAVE COVERED THE RANCH LOCATION. I DO NOT KNOW AT THIS TIME IF **BRITT** WAS AROUND, BUT HIS TWO OLDER SONS COULD HAVE BEEN THE ONES WHO SOLD THE 14,000 ACRES TO MR. **WILLIAMS** FOR HIS RANCH.

WE CAN NOT FIND WHAT THE SIZE OF THE LAND GRANT WAS, BUT FROM THE NUMBERS WE SEE THAT WERE GIVEN TO OTHERS OF HIS LARGE FAMILY, THEY COULD HAVE SOLD THAT AND NEVER MISSED IT.











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