

George Washington Baird

(16 December 1821 - 12 Mar 1876)

After his discharge from the army in 1816, Isaac Baird moved about twenty miles southeast across the Tennessee border and settled in the town of Springfield in Robertson County, Tennessee where he worked as a hatter. He married a daughter of Jonathan Ferguson, one of the town's founders, and by the 1820 census they had produced a daughter. The following year they had a son. They gave him the name "George Washington", which perhaps the most popular of the honorific names given to boys at that time.¹ Isaac Baird's wife and daughter died sometime in the 1820s and he and his young son evidently were living with his wife's extended family when the 1830 census was taken. That census shows John W. Ferguson, Isaac's brother-in-law, heading a household that included his widowed mother, his two sisters and younger brother, and two "extra" males aged 40-50 and 0-10 who were probably Isaac Baird and his son George. A few years later, probably about the time George entered his teens, his father died leaving George truly orphaned. His grandmother and spinster aunts effectively adopted him. In the 1840 census, his grandmother Elizabeth Ferguson headed a household with two older females (evidently her spinster daughters Mary and Nancy) and one male aged 15-20 who was surely George Baird.

When his grandmother Elizabeth Ferguson died in 1845, 23-year old George W. Baird was appointed administrator of her estate.² He recorded a final settlement of the estate in August 1849.³ Her son Moses had predeceased her, and so her estate was divided equally among her four heirs: John W. Ferguson, Mary Ferguson, Nancy Ferguson, and George Baird as the only heir of his mother. (Though we know that his mother's maiden name was Ferguson, we do not know her given name.) George's inheritance consisted mainly of a town lot in Springfield.

He courted and married Mary Elizabeth Traughber, daughter of a neighbor named William Traughber and his wife Permilia Gorham. William Traughber had sold his property in the area in late 1845 and gone to Texas in the spring of 1846, apparently leaving his younger children in the care of their older sister Lydia Gorham. The date of the marriage was recorded as 28 October 1847 in the family bible of one of his granddaughters.⁴ However, the marriage return by Thomas Farmer, the J.P. in Robertson County who married them, is dated 7 October 1847.⁵

Shortly after his marriage, on 3 May 1848, he purchased two wagons, a bay horse and household furniture in Springfield. He seems to have used the wagons to transport people leaving the area on at least one occasion. We have two letters he wrote on the trail in late 1848 to his wife back in Springfield.⁶ The first is dated 19 November 1848 from Lawrence, Alabama, and the second is dated 23 November 1848 from Buzzard Roost, Alabama. They indicate he delivered a Mrs. Beaumont to northwestern Alabama and picked up return passengers for Springfield. We also have a return letter from Mary dated 31 November 1848, which seems to indicate he was renting

¹ His full name appears in few records, notably a notice or two in the Dallas newspaper, but it is given in full by his granddaughter's family Bible.

² Robertson County Will Book 12, p507

³ Robertson County Will Book 15, p233

⁴ Bible of Georgia Lee Brown Fowler, daughter of Mary Emma Baird, courtesy of Robert E. Fowler of Houston, her grandson. A photocopy of the Bible pages was provided by Mr. Fowler in 1972.

⁵ Robertson County Marriage Bonds, Book 1, p140.

⁶ Letters courtesy of Robert E. Fowler.

out a horse from a stable in Springfield. It is interesting that both George and Mary signed these letters as "Baird". George seems to have been the first in the family to consistently use that spelling.

Within a few months, George evidently decided to join his father-in-law in Dallas. On 17 August 1849 George sold his inherited town lot in Springfield to his aunt, Miss Mary Ferguson.⁷ Within two months, George and Mary were living in Dallas.

George and Mary Baird Move to Texas

Dallas was only a small farm community when George and Mary Baird arrived in 1849, and northern Texas still wild country. As late as 1841 North Texas was an unpeopled wilderness not much changed since Cortez had conquered Mexico. The first recorded expedition to the Dallas area had been in 1837, when a party of 29 armed men camped on the Trinity River, were attacked by Indians, and fought their way south along the river to what is now Dallas, losing their commander and 8 other men in the process. Two years later the first Congress in Austin ordered the construction of a military road from Austin northeast to the Red River that, despite frequent Indian attacks, was laid out to pass through the confluence of the Main and Elm Forks of the Trinity. In 1841 the Republic of Texas authorized the Texas Emigration and Land Company, also known as W. S. Peters and Associates, commonly known as the "Peters Colony", to recruit settlers to occupy a 1,300-square-mile area from present Dallas County northward to the Red River. The company advertised widely for settlers throughout the United States and Europe. John Neely Bryan, the first settler, arrived alone in November 1841, followed by several families early in 1842. Bryan staked out a headright claim of 640 acres fronting on the east bank of the Trinity River, personally laid out the original town on his land and began selling lots. By late that year, records were referring to the area as "Dallas".⁸ In 1843 an Indian treaty was signed which removed them west of Ft. Worth. (That didn't stop the occasional intrusion; settlers on the Trinity were still being killed in occasional raids as late as 1848.) Texas became a state in 1845 and its first Legislature made the Dallas area a county in 1846. In 1850 an election was held to choose the permanent county seat and, in a runoff, Dallas beat out Hord's Ridge by a vote of 244-216.

William Traughber, Mary Baird's father, had arrived in Dallas in 1846 and opened the town's second saloon. He was also remembered as the town's first baker by one early resident who wrote 1925 that "George Beard [sic] married the daughter of Mr. Trauber, the first baker."⁹ He apparently left his family back in Tennessee, perhaps intending to bring them later. It seems likely that George Baird visited his father-in-law at some point, but he did not move permanently to Texas until the summer of 1849. John Henry Brown's 1892 history of Dallas lists the first pioneers of Dallas, among them "Geo. W. Baird 1849; married Mary E. Traughber."¹⁰ I note that Mary must have been noticeably pregnant when they arrived, for their son George was born only three months after their last appearance in Tennessee records.

⁷ Robertson County Deed Book 6, p166

⁸ The county is believed to have been named for George Mifflin Dallas, vice president under James K. Polk. However, John Neely Bryan, who founded the town, said he named the town after a friend.

⁹ *Dallas Morning News* issue of 21 June 1925, section 3, page 10, a lengthy interview of Addie K. (Dye) McDermett.

¹⁰ Memorial & Biographical History of Dallas County, John Henry Brown (Lewis Publishing Co., Chicago, 1892)

On 25 October 1849, Mary E. Baird bought two lots in town near the public square from John Neely Bryan.¹¹¹² George was already in the habit of keeping his property in his wife's name, a common tactic in those days to frustrate creditors. Her father William Traughber bought two adjoining lots on the same block.

William Traughber Dies

In February 1850 Mary's father died intestate in Dallas County. He left an estate worth \$1,500 comprised mainly of his 640-acre headright grant, twelve building lots in town, and a slave. George W. Baird petitioned to be named administrator of the estate and argued that, because William Traughber's other two children were non-residents of Texas and Traughber had done enough for them in his lifetime, his wife Mary E. Baird should inherit the whole estate.¹³ Because he was the only relative in the area George was appointed the administrator, but the court did not buy his argument regarding the distribution. Traughber's other children, William Traughber Jr. and Lydia Traughber Gorham, both still living in Tennessee, received equal shares of the estate.

George Baird didn't settle the estate until August 1852, at which time William Traughber Jr. inherited his father's 640-acre headright grant and Lydia Traughber Gorham and her husband received eight lots comprising all of Block 56 in Dallas. George and Mary Baird inherited a negro boy named Adam and four lots in downtown Dallas. Two of the lots were in Block 10. George and Mary already owned a quarter of the block and this inheritance gave them title to half of it. They would later buy another quarter.

The Bairds Initially Settle Outside of Town

George was enumerated in the 1850 census of Dallas County, taken on November 4, with Mary E. Baird and their first child, Geo. R. His occupation was given as "tailor" – the only one in the county. In an extraordinary coincidence, five households away was a carpenter from Tennessee named Allen Baird. [He was consistently "Allen Beard" in later records.]

It isn't clear exactly where the Bairds initially settled when they arrived in Texas. Although they owned lots in town, they didn't build their house there until several years later. In 1850 the entire population of the county was about 2,700 people scattered across 278 farms and several tiny market communities. About 430 people actually lived in or near the town of Dallas. The 1850 census enumerates the Bairds hundreds of households away from John Neely Bryan and others who we know lived in the town, suggesting they lived some miles away. By the mid-1850s they were living a few miles northwest of Dallas at a place called Record's Crossing, just south of what is now the Love Field airport. Col. George Washington Record arrived in the area in 1853 and built a dam and mill on the Elm Fork of the Trinity River. The resulting shallows became a popular river crossing that is still commemorated today by Record Crossing Road. According to his daughter's statement made in 1949 George Baird was a partner in Record's mill.

¹¹ Surveys identified the block as Block 13, but later city maps changed the designation to Block 10.

¹² Dallas County Deed Book B, p218

¹³ Dallas County Probate Record #664. See also TRAUGHBER files.

George Becomes a Miller

It wasn't long before he established his own mill. On 6 August 1856 the Texas Legislature authorized the incorporation of the Osceola Mill Company for "George W. Baird and such other persons as he may associate with" and endowed it with a charter to erect a dam across the Elm Fork of the Trinity River for the purpose of "securing the water power necessary to run a saw, grist and flouring mill."¹⁴ The dam was to be built about one mile above the junction of the Elm Fork with the Trinity, about five miles northwest of central Dallas, and a bit closer to town than Record's Crossing, on 113 acres that George owned. George had anticipated the Legislature's approval, as he was advertising in the Dallas Weekly Herald more than a year earlier on 7 April 1855 that "George W. Baird & Co", had just completed the Osceola Saw and Grist Mill and that it would shortly be ready to grind wheat as well.¹⁵ In later advertisements he set the fee for grinding corn and wheat as a one-eighth share of the total.

The Bairds Move to Town

John Neely Bryan had laid out the town of Dallas in blocks of roughly an acre each and subdivided each block into eight lots measuring 50 by 100 feet. Mary Baird had bought two of the lots in Block 10 (shown as Block 13 in early maps) in 1849, then inherited her father's two adjoining lots the following year, and in 1852 she bought two more lots, giving the Bairds ownership of three-quarters of the city block bounded by Elm, Pacific, Houston, and Broadway (a street which no longer exists) on bluff above the river. A lawyer named John McCoy built the first frame house in town in 1852 and other lot owners soon followed. By early 1856, the Bairds had constructed a large framed two-story house on their original two lots, and moved into town.

The site of the house was (and still is) prime real estate, overlooking the river from the bluff above and less than two blocks from what was then the town square. The only other occupant of the block was Maxime Guillot, a French immigrant who established a carriage factory in Dallas in 1852 and is thought to have been the city's first millionaire.¹⁶ An 1872 map of Dallas appears to show the Baird house, with two large sheds at its rear, and Guillot's house on the northeastern corner of the lot with his factory behind it.

The Baird lots are, indirectly, moderately famous. The Bairds built their house on Lots 7 and 8, their original purchase, which together comprised the southeastern quarter of the block. The house was located on the corner of Elm and Houston, but faced onto Houston, as the address shown in later city directories was 16 South Houston Street. (The dividing line between north and south Houston was later altered.) George's widow sold the property to the railroad in 1882. After changing hands a few times, the property was acquired in 1894 by the Rock Island Plow Company, which tore down the Baird house and in 1899 built a seven-story brick building on the

¹⁴ The Laws of the State of Texas 1822-1897, (The Gammel Book Company, 1898), p580.

¹⁵ He advertised in each issue of the Dallas *Weekly Herald* from 7 April 1855 through at least late 1856.

¹⁶ Maxime Guillot (1824–1889) is thought to have been the first Dallas millionaire. He established the first factory in Dallas 1852, making carriages that were in high demand throughout the state. He later established Dallas's first bakery.

site that, in 1963, was known as the Texas School Book Repository. That building is now the Dallas County Administration Building. (See the separate document for an interesting sidebar on this famous building and a recent archeological excavation of the other Baird lots on the block.)

George Claims a Place in Dallas Society

Dallas was incorporated as a town in 1856 and held its first election on 5 April 1856. Dr. Samuel B. Pryor was elected mayor. George W. Baird was elected one of six aldermen, with 57 votes. (Another alderman was James Latimer, the owner and editor of the *Daily Herald*.) Records show that he served as alderman again during the Civil War, though no election results for that period exist. In 1859 he was elected Marshall of Dallas with 37 of the 39 votes cast, and lost the election for Mayor the following year by just one vote.¹⁷ He would later be elected constable, tax assessor and collector, and serve several terms as a justice of the peace. By 1856 he was also using his downtown location to advertise his services as a notary public and "General Agent for the sale and purchase of land, paying of taxes, and conveyancing generally".¹⁸ He would continue as one of a handful of notaries public for at least the next ten years.

He and several other men of influence in Dallas were Freemasons. The records of the Tannehill Masonic Lodge of Dallas show he had been initiated into the Masons in Tennessee in 1847 and joined the Tannehill Lodge in Dallas on 23 February 1850. The lodge had been chartered just a month earlier with six members. In late 1850 it began construction on a two-story masonic lodge just two blocks down Houston Street from the future Baird home. The first floor of that building was Dallas's only meeting hall for the next several years.¹⁹ George W. Baird was a master mason who served the lodge as tyler in 1852 and junior warden in 1861 and 1862.

He was also a trustee of the Dallas Academy, the first large private school for men and women established in Dallas.^{20 21} It advertised itself as a "public school" and was conducted in first floor of the Masonic Lodge building, two blocks from the Baird house, from 1854 to 1876. The five other trustees included George W Guess and Dr. Samuel Pryor, the first mayor of Dallas. A writer of the period described the school as "knee-deep in sand, full of fleas, and with cattle browsing about outside".

He Enters the Grocery Business

In the summer of 1859 George Baird sold the Osceola Mill Company and the adjoining 113 acres of land (along with its herd of pigs) and opened a grocery store on the main square in downtown Dallas.²² Both the 1860 and 1870 censuses list his occupation as "grocer", a business he apparently was building a year or so before selling the mill. By 1858 he was the local agent for

¹⁷ Election information from Memorial & Biographical History of Dallas County, John Henry Brown (Lewis Publishing Co., Chicago, 1892). Also see *Dallas Weekly Herald* issue of 10 August 1859 and others.

¹⁸ *Dallas Weekly Herald* issue of 9 August 1856, p4.

¹⁹ The lodge was built on the corner of Houston and Carondelet, which was later renamed Ross St.

²⁰ See *Dallas Weekly Herald* issue of 13 March 1861, p2 and subsequent issues. George W. Guess and Samuel B. Pryor were two of the other five trustees.

²¹ The WPA Dallas Guide and History Book, (UNT Press, 1992), pp181-2.

²² He advertised his mill for sale in the *Dallas Weekly News* in June 1859.

Godey's magazine (the most widely circulated periodical in the country prior to the Civil War.)²³ The 24 August 1859 edition of the *Dallas Weekly Herald* carried this peculiar advertisement announcing his new venture:

That old saying "Wait for the wagon" has become obsolete, for let it be known that the wagon has come and has brought to the undersigned one of the most complete assortment of groceries that ever came to Dallas, among which may be found coffee, sugar, cigars, tobacco, soda, pepper, oysters, sardines, pickles, starch, soap, Whybrown celebrated pie fruits. These fruits put up in air tight cans, hermetically sealed, and are as fresh as when first taken from the trees. Also pure liquors of all kinds. Family Grocers for the lame, the sick, the halt, and those that can't see as well as all that are dry and thirsty. George W. Baird.

Elsewhere in the same issue, the editor noted:

We call attention to the new advertisement of G. W. Baird, who has just received a fresh supply of all that is good in the line of eating and drinking – fresh fruits, oysters, pickles, wines, strawberry and blackberry brandies, etc. too numerous to mention... George has received also sugar, coffee, candles, salt and other articles in the family grocery line... Give him a call, gentlemen, as he promises great bargains, and rest assured he will fulfill all that he says in his advertisement.

Meanwhile Back in Springfield, Tennessee...

George Baird and his first cousin John W. Ferguson Jr. had been successfully sued in Robertson County, Tennessee over a joint unpaid debt to M. D. Crockett in 1855.²⁴ Since George had sold his property in Tennessee and was beyond the reach of the local Sheriff, Ferguson was forced to pay the debt. Four years later, Ferguson found a way to recover from George Baird. On 26 November 1859 John W. Ferguson Jr. filed suit in Robertson County against George and Mary Baird to recover the debt of \$145.²⁵ The suit stated "...Baird was in this County October last to see his aunt [Mary Ferguson] and to get her to remove with him to the State of Texas, which she did, but before removing...said Baird procured her...to make a deed for two Town lots in Springfield...to his wife Mary." Ferguson charged that George had paid for the lots himself but had the deed made out to his wife to avoid attachment by his creditors. Indeed, the Robertson County deed books contain a deed from Mary Ferguson to Mary E. Baird for the two lots, town lots number 37 and 39, dated 18 October 1859.²⁶ The court sided with Ferguson and awarded him a portion of one lot to satisfy the debt.

And Back in Dallas...

²³ Dallas *Weekly Herald* issue of 3 November 1858, p3.

²⁴ Robertson County Chancery Court Case #89

²⁵ Robertson County Chancery Court Case #582

²⁶ Robertson County Deed Book 11, p177 (Lot 37 was the one George Baird had sold in 1849.)

Mary's brother Billy Traughber moved to Dallas in 1860, initially living with George and Mary Baird, and late that year the Baird grocery business became known as "Baird & Traughber.²⁷ The partnership did not last long. George and Mary are in the 1860 census of Dallas, with their three oldest children in the household. His real estate value had climbed from \$200 in 1850 to \$1,700 evidently as a result of the growth of the town, and he owned \$3,500 in personal property. Dallas County's population by this time had grown to 7,720 whites and 1,080 slaves. The population of the city was 678 whites and 97 slaves. In the countryside, amidst extensive corn and wheat fields, were more than 35,000 cattle, about 21,000 sheep, and more than 16,000 hogs. Somewhat ironically given later events, Dallas had an unusually low proportion of slaves and only 228 slave owners. In 1860 much of downtown burned and the blame was placed northern instigators and slaves, three of whom were hanged for the crime.

James Latimer, the owner of the Dallas *Weekly Herald* during the 1850s, was another of the original aldermen and evidently a friend of George Baird's. At least, there are numerous articles in that newspaper mentioning him. Among them is the note that "*Geo. W. Baird, Constable, tendered his resignation*" in the 9 May 1860 issue. In the 13 March 1861 issue is a report by the mayor that includes the statement: "*Taxes collected by the former Assessor and Collector, Geo. W. Baird*".

In March 1861 George moved his grocery store across the public square. The original building had been on the square opposite the Dallas Hotel. The new building, of brick, was located on the west side of the town square.

The Civil War

George Baird and most of his contemporaries in Dallas were Democrats, convinced of the impending destruction of their society following Lincoln's election. Like many Texans, he openly advocated secession. The *Weekly Herald*'s editorial following the election encourage military preparations to "assert [our] independence rather than remain in vassalage and a state of dependent inequality under black Republican rule." In November 1860 George Baird presented the *Weekly Herald* with a lithograph, copies of which he sold in his store, entitled "The Union As It Is", described by the editor as depicting "a flock of sheep, each representing a State. Texas has already jumped over the fence, and South Carolina following suit, and the whole of the others representing the Southern States are about to follow."²⁸ A month later the newspaper reported that "in view of the alarming condition of the country" George W. Baird was attempting to raise a company of cavalry "to be ready for any emergency that may arise."²⁹

Two months later George briefly joined the Texas State Troops. Texas officially seceded from the Union in February 1861 and joined the Confederacy a month later. In that intervening month a local lawyer named John J. Good organized a company of the Texas Artillery, initially called the Dallas Light Artillery, drawing several of its members from the cream of Dallas society. "Geo.

²⁷ Dallas *Weekly Herald* issues of 24 October, 7 November, and 14 November 1860.

²⁸ Dallas *Weekly Herald* issue of 28 November 1860, p3. The picture was known as a Cohograph after the designer, John Jeremiah "Coho" Smith, an early settler of Dallas, Texas Ranger, schoolteacher, and artist.

²⁹ Dallas *Weekly Herald* issue of 5 December 1860, p3.

W. Baird” is listed a private on the battery’s initial muster roll, dated 22 February 1861.³⁰ (It was on the following day that 61,000 Texans went to the polls and voted three-to-one to approve the disunion and join the Confederacy.) The Texas Confederate Index contains an entry showing that George Baird used his own horse but was issued one Navy six-shooter, one rifle, two 12-pound mountain howitzers with a supply of shot and shell, 40 artillery sabers and an uncertain number of rifles “of altered musket pattern of ‘57” by the Army.³¹ This is an astonishingly peculiar record for a mere private, suggesting that he was actually acting as a quartermaster for the battery. The two howitzers comprised the sum total of the unit’s artillery pieces.

He was no longer listed among the company’s soldiers in a muster of May 1861, and he appears in no subsequent muster rolls. Capt. John J. Good, a fellow Mason, had managed to raise about fifty men in Dallas County by 1 June 1861, at which time his unit was merged with an artillery unit of another fifty men from Smith County commanded by Lt. James P. Douglas. The muster rolls of this combined battery begin in June 1861 and show that several prominent members of Dallas society, among them George Baird, were no longer associated with the unit. (His brother-in-law Billy Traughber, however, joined the unit in June.) The company marched to Arkansas that summer and subsequently fought in several battles in Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Georgia before surrendering near Mobile, Alabama in May 1865.³² It is remembered both for its many battles and as the only Texas battery to serve east of the Mississippi.

George Baird’s daughter Emma later stated that her father’s “physical disability” and grocery experience led to his appointment as a commissary officer. The precise nature of his disability is unknown; there is not a clue to its nature in any record. Nor is there any official record of his appointment, though her recollection seems to be supported by at least two newspaper notices. Texas was called “the granary of the Confederacy” and Dallas was the chief food-producing center for North Texas, leading the Confederate government to choose it as the general quartermasters and commissary headquarters for the army of the Trans-Mississippi Department. The Dallas *Times Herald* reported on 4 October 1862 that George Baird was the “authorized agent” to receive clothing for the 31st Texas Infantry.³³ A month later it reported that George W. Baird was appointed the authorized agent to receive donations of “comfortable clothing for the approaching winter” to be shipped to soldiers in Arkansas and Mississippi.³⁴ The newspaper also reported on several occasions that George W. Baird had received letters from a variety of officers in the field. At least two of these were from his friend Col. George W. Guess (see the letters sidebar for one of them).

George was clearly residing in Dallas during the war, for on 19 May 1862 he was elected a justice for Dallas County. Although few records of this period survive, he was elected again as a justice in 1864, 1865 and 1866 and probably served continuously during this period.³⁵ A newspaper

³⁰ National Archives Record NARA M323, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers from Texas Units, Roll 0243. His friend George W. Guess, later a Colonel, is also listed as a private.

³¹ Civil War Muster Rolls Index Cards, Texas State Library. Also available as online images at ancestry.com

³² Texans Who Wore the Gray, Sidney Smith Johnson (self-published, 1907), pp395-405 contains a first-hand account of the company’s exploits by James B. Lunsford.

³³ Dallas *Weekly Herald* issue of 4 October 1862, p2.

³⁴ Dallas *Weekly Herald* issue of 1 November 1862, p1.

³⁵ *Dallas Journal*, Vol. 46, pp69-70 references commissioner’s court minutes, and election returns showing that he was one of the judges of Dallas County.

report of his appointment in 1865 by the Provisional State Government describes him as the Justice for Precinct 1 (downtown Dallas) and one of two Notaries Public of the county.³⁶

The only official records of Dallas during the Civil War are the notes of John Crockett, who in 1887 said he acted as mayor but couldn't remember exactly how he got the job. [He was elected mayor in the same 1859 election in which George was elected Marshall, reelected two years later, and elected again in 1865. From 1862 through 1865 there was technically no mayor, Dallas being governed by a military governor.] Crockett's notes contain only a few entries for the period of the war, two of which mention George Baird:

December 18, 1865. Council met. Present were Aldermen Charles Newton, W. H. Thomas, A. W. Morton, George W. Baird, ___ Johnson, and J. S. Ballard.

Feb. 9, 1866. Fined George W. Baird \$5 for assault on M. Guillot.

Reconstruction Comes to Dallas

Texas was the last of the Confederate States to surrender, in part because it was the last to learn that the war had ended. Word of the surrender at Appomattox finally reached the port city of Galveston more than three weeks after the fact, and it was there on 2 June 1865 that Gen. Kirby Smith surrendered the Trans-Mississippi Department. On 19 June 1865 the first federal troops arrived to impose military rule.³⁷ Dallas, and essentially all of Texas, had escaped the worst of the destruction of the Civil War because no federal troops ever reached it. But the post war level of resentment and violence toward unionists and freed slaves in Dallas was particularly brutal. The Freedman's Bureau arrived in Dallas in early 1867 and immediately sought testimony of post war violence against blacks.³⁸ The Bureau initially brought more than 50 cases of whippings, shootings, and hangings to the grand jury but was unable to secure a single indictment. John J Good, the former artillery captain, was by then the presiding judge of the District Court, and neither he nor any other law enforcement official would prosecute these cases against white men. (The Freedman's Bureau agent resorted to dispensing his own justice, was recalled, and his replacement murdered.)

One of those early cases was against George W. Baird, a sitting justice also described in the indictment as a "former city councilman". He was accused of tying a free black woman named Charity to a log in August 1865 and inflicting 100 lashes on her because she protested the "continual rapes inflicted upon her daughter by a favored servant of Baird's."³⁹ The Freedman's Bureau agent stated in his complaint that "the woman & her daughter...were subjected to the most infernal treatment. She was whipt for begging that her child might be protected from the constant ravishing of a favorite Blackman in [Baird's] place."⁴⁰ Ironically, George Baird was not a slave owner. Although the 1850 census showed him as the owner of a 30-year old male slave, perhaps the slave Adam inherited from his father-in-law, the 1860 census shows that he owned no slaves.

³⁶ Dallas Weekly Herald issue of 2 September 1865, p2.

³⁷ Texas blacks henceforth celebrated "Juneteenth".

³⁸ The Freedman's Bureau was established by Congress to help freed blacks adjust to freedom by adjudicating labor contracts, establishing schools, protecting freedmen from violence, and so forth.

³⁹ Freedman's Bureau Reports, reported in PhD dissertation of James M. Davidson, University of Texas at Austin,

⁴⁰ Legacies: A History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Fall 1989), p27.

In early 1867 Congress passed the punitive “radical reconstruction” act, one effect of which was that all Democratic officials were removed from office as impediments to Reconstruction and replaced by military appointees. Justices George W. Baird and John Neely Bryan were removed from office on the same day in November 1867 by military order No. 195.⁴¹ The local newspaper, however, continued to refer to him as “George W. Baird, Esq.” for the next several years. He was briefly removed from the voter rolls at the same time.⁴²

The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which became law on 9 July 1868, provided that any person who had taken an oath of office to uphold the Constitution, and subsequently taken part in the rebellion, could not hold any sort of public office. However, it also provided that Congress could restore those rights to individuals by a two-thirds vote of both houses. An Act of Congress on 7 March 1870 removed “all legal and political disabilities imposed by the fourteenth amendment of the Constitution...by reason of participation in the late rebellion” to a lengthy list of named persons, including eleven persons residing in Dallas County – one of whom was “G. W. Baird” of Dallas.⁴³

George Baird Retires

Immediately after the war George advertised in the newspaper that he was the local distributor of a variety of products sold around town, notably the celebrated Calhoun plow from Kentucky and tea from the A&P Company. Then in May 1869 he purchased the stock of a competing grocery and liquor store on the west side of Jefferson Street and began enthusiastically advertising his business one door from the corner of Jefferson and Main on the public square.⁴⁴ The 1870 census shows George and Mary, and all five of their surviving children, living at their home on Houston Street.⁴⁵ George was listed as a grocer with \$3,000 in real estate and \$500 in personal property.⁴⁶ His oldest son, George Rolando Baird, age 20, was listed as a “clerk in store” with \$1,000 in real estate and \$2,000 of personal property.

On 1 August 1870, George sold the entire stock in his grocery store “situated in the Town of Dallas on Jefferson Street one door north of the Public Square” to his eldest son, George Rolando Baird, and retired from the business.⁴⁷ He was 48 years old.

He and Mary were taking in boarders by this time, as the 1870 census shows Peter Semsen, a 52-year old stonemason from Denmark, and John Hanna, a 32-year old lawyer, boarding in their house. A 30-year old mulatto woman named Amanda Lawson, listed as a domestic servant, was also living there along with her two children Ellen, 16, and Lucy, 12. The initial Dallas city directory, issued in 1875, shows George W. Baird still running a boardinghouse at his home at 16

⁴¹ The Dallas Journal, Volume 46 (2000), p70. Also reported contemporarily in *Flake's Bulletin*, Vol. V, Issue 62, p3.

⁴² The Dallas Journal, Volume 41 (1995), 16.

⁴³ Acts and Resolutions of the United States of America Passed at the Session of the Forty-first Congress, (US Government Printing Office, 1870), p370

⁴⁴ *Dallas Weekly Herald* issue of 5 June 1869, p3. He advertised “Baird’s at Jefferson Street” in subsequent issues.

⁴⁵ Dallas County 1870 census: Precinct 1, p199.

⁴⁶ The census enumerated the family on 1 September, after he sold his store, but the entries were supposed to reflect conditions as of the official census date of 1 June.

⁴⁷ Dallas County Deed Book N, p102.

South Houston St.

By 1875 Dallas had become a bona fide city. It had a brand new limestone courthouse, an opera house, and several large hotels. The telegraph had reached town in 1872 along with the Houston and Texas Central Railroad. That same year an iron bridge was built across the Trinity just a few blocks from the Baird house. In 1873 the Texas and Pacific Railroad reached Dallas, making it one of the first rail crossroads in the region. The old masonic hall was sold, no longer needed as the city's meeting place. The following year brought a mule-powered streetcar system and shortly thereafter the first public schools opened. The population, dominated by twenty-somethings in 1850, had aged considerably. Few of the original settlers remained from log-cabin days, but in 1875 they decided to organize themselves to commemorate their place in Dallas history.

The 24 July 1875 edition of the *Dallas Daily Herald* reports a meeting on 13 July 1875 to organize a group called the "Pioneers of Dallas County". There were 112 charter members, two of whom were George and Mary Baird. George was listed 51st in the roughly chronological order: "G. W. Baird came to the County Oct. 20, 1849." Mary was listed 52nd: "Mary E. Baird came to the County May 1846 [probably meaning the date her father arrived]." George Baird ran for Justice of the Peace in February 1876, less than a month before his death.⁴⁸

George Baird's Obituary

He died 12 March 1876 in Dallas, at the age of 54, according to the family Bible. His burial place is a mystery, though he may have been laid to rest in the Masonic cemetery. There are no Baird stones extant in any of the old cemeteries in Dallas. The *Dallas Daily Herald* issue of 14 March 1876 carried the following front-page story under the headline "Another Old Citizen Gone":

Our community was startled yesterday morning by the announcement that George W. Baird was dead. On inquiry, it was ascertained that Mr. Baird died suddenly at his residence on Sunday at 12 o'clock, of typhoid fever. In the prime of his life, his face was familiar to all of our citizens, old and new, for he was a genial, affable, and it might be said, winning man. By which it is meant that George Baird was one of those sons of nature whose faces indicate their true character. The assertion may be ventured that he had not on earth, and never had, a personal enemy. His impulses were ever overflowing with generosity to all his fellows. Mistakes he may have made, it is true, but willful wrong he never committed.

Mr. Baird was born and raised in Robertson County, Tennessee; married to Miss Elizabeth Traughber in 1847; moved to Texas in 1849, and was in the fifty-sixth year [sic] of his age at the date of his death. His home has ever been, since landing in Texas, in the town and city of Dallas. He has been one of us from our infantile state, with all the trials of a frontier village, to our present condition as a flourishing city of fifteen thousand inhabitants. But few men have such a record. Mr. John W. Smith, Wormly Carter, and Judge James Patterson, all from the same county in Kentucky, are among the few survivors of those early days in our town. The great mass of our city population are comparatively new citizens, but all delight to honor the old original few who laid the foundations of our

⁴⁸ *Dallas Daily Herald* issue of 22 February 1876. He finished third of eight candidates, receiving 703 votes.

present prosperous city.

Mr. Baird was in the prime of his life. But three days since he was on our streets in apparent health, now he sleeps in his silent tomb. He leaves a widow, two married children and three younger sons, besides other kindred who have the sympathies of this entire community. His eldest son, Rolando, is absent in Arkansas, but was telegraphed to and was expected home last night.

We may add, and do so with pleasure, that from its foundation twenty-six years ago to the present time, Mr. Baird was a continuous subscriber to The Herald, and hence, in his death The Herald has a right to feel, as it does, a double loss in his death.

Mary Baird is Sued

On 19 April 1878 Alzeda Persise, a sister of Mary and Nancy Ferguson and an aunt of George Baird, filed suit back in Robertson County, Tennessee against Mary Baird and her children. Mary Baird had bought two lots in Springfield from George's aunt Mary Ferguson in 1859, evidently as part of George's attempt to lock up his inheritance. As Alzeda Persise claimed in her suit, Mary Ferguson had previously conveyed the lots to her sister Nancy Ferguson in 1851 and therefore no longer had title when she deeded them to Mary Baird. Because Nancy Ferguson died intestate, single and childless in 1855, the lots should have been part of her estate and distributed equally among her brothers and sisters. Alzeda Ferguson argued that, since both Nancy and Mary Ferguson were now dead, the lots should be sold and the proceeds distributed equally among Mary Ferguson's siblings or their heirs. The court agreed and ordered on 23 May 1878.⁴⁹ The court order states that George Baird was a nephew of Nancy and Mary, therefore his children were collectively entitled to a full share of both estates. The lots were sold later that year and the \$350 proceeds distributed among the heirs.

Mary Baird's Last Years

Mary Elizabeth Baird continued to live at 16 South Houston, and operated the boarding house there, for six years after her husband's death. She is enumerated (as "Beard") in the 1880 census heading a household that included her daughter Emma Brown, granddaughter Georgia Brown, and her three sons William, Lee, and Robert. Boarding at the same address was a 45-year old railroad clerk from New Jersey named A. S. Burt, his wife and son and a 25-year old woman from Virginia named Lucy Ladd.

On 15 August 1882, after selling her house to the railroad, she bought a house at 320 Masten Street (now called St. Paul St.). She is listed at that address in the 1884, 1886, 1888, and 1889 city directories. She died 19 January 1890 in Dallas according to the family Bible. There is no settlement of her estate in the Dallas records. Her death predates the recording of death records.

The children of George W. and Mary E. Baird, are listed in the family Bible. Of the seven children, five survived to reach adulthood. Only two of the children had children of their own.

⁴⁹ Robertson County Chancery Court Case #1269

My brother and I, and his two sons, are George Baird's only remaining descendants who carry the name.

1. **George Rolando Baird** (28 November 1849 - 25 January 1895) See separate paper.
2. **Parmilia Baird** (c1852 – c1852) The Baird-Brown-Fowler Bible lists a child named "Parmilia" (Permelia?) between George and Mary Emma in the list of George Baird's children. Though no dates accompanied the listing, it seems likely she was the first daughter, named after Mary's mother. She is not shown in any census and evidently died in infancy. The 1854 letter from Mary Ferguson to George Baird mentions only one child, a further confirmation that this daughter died in infancy.
3. **Mary Emma Baird** (2 November 1856 – 9 April 1950) As a 15-year old Mary Emma was mentioned in the 12 October 1872 edition of the *Dallas Time Herald* as being "badly scratched and bruised" by a frightened horse at the Dallas Fairgrounds.⁵⁰ She married before her 17th birthday to William Cass Brown on 9 September 1873. They had one child, Georgia Lee Brown (9 July 1874 - 23 April 1951). According to Georgia's family bible, a second daughter, Nellie, died hours after being born on 24 June 1876.⁵¹ Mary Emma was awarded a divorce less than five years later for "cruelty & assault against pltf & child", the decree being issued on 21 June 1878.⁵² Mary Emma was awarded custody of her daughter Georgia. Mary Emma, who was only 21 at the time, never remarried.

In the 1880 census, Mary Emma and her daughter Georgia were living with her mother, Mary E. Baird. The whereabouts of William Cass Brown is unknown but he was no longer in the area, and did not appear in city directories after 1878. The Bible, which shows William Cass Brown's birth date as 5 December 1848, has neither a death date nor any other clue as to what became of him. Emma continued to live in Dallas and is listed there in censuses through 1930 (the latest available at this writing.) In 1900 Emma was head of a household consisting of her daughter Georgia, grandson William G. Fowler, and her brother William Guess Baird. In 1910 she headed the same household, with her brother Robert Edwin Baird having joined it. In 1930, the same three people are in the household. In the 1940 census, the last available to the public, Emma Brown and her daughter Georgia Fowler were living together at 5420 Columbia St.

Mary Emma won a *Dallas Times Herald* contest in 1949 as the oldest pioneer in Dallas. On Sunday August 28, the paper published a special issue devoted to the history of Dallas. Emma's photograph and story are on page one. The story reads:

Mrs. Mary Emma Brown, a Dallas County resident since her birth Nov. 2, 1856, has lived in the County longer than any of the 300 citizens nominated for the Times Herald Pioneer Contest. She will receive \$100 as first award in the search conducted with the preparation of the Herald's special edition. Mrs. Brown's father was George. W. Baird,

⁵⁰ Dallas *Times Herald* issue of 12 October 1872, page 3.

⁵¹ The 1900 census asked mothers the number of children and how many were living as of 1900. Mary Emma declared she had given birth to two children, one of whom was still living.

⁵² *The Dallas Journal*, (Dallas Genealogical Society), Volume 44 (1998), p27.

who was a partner of Capt. Record in operation of a grist mill at the location now known as Record's Crossing. The Baird family was living at the mill when daughter Mary Emma was born. In a short time Baird moved into town and operated a grocery store on the square. During the War Between the States Baird's physical disability, coupled with his grocery experience led him to his appointment as commissary officer for the Confederates. The daughter was courted in the family home, at Elm and Houston, by a young Virginian, W. C. Brown who had come to Texas with the Sanger brothers. After their marriage Brown was a broker for tallow and hides. Now bedridden and critically ill as a result of a broken hip suffered last January, Mrs. Brown lives with her daughter Mrs. Georgie Fowler.

Emma died late the following winter of “cardiac decomposition” after moving to a rest home because of encroaching senility. She was buried in the Oakland Cemetery where she shares a stone with her brothers Robert and William.

Emma had two children altogether, Georgia Lee Brown and a daughter she named Nellie who died in infancy.

3.1. **Georgia Lee Brown** (9 July 1874 – 23 April 1951) Her grandson, Robert E. Fowler of Houston, provided all of the old letters and the Baird-Brown-Fowler family Bible records. Georgia married William Robert Fowler on 1 May 1891 in Dallas.⁵³ She had a son named William Brown Fowler in 1892 but was divorced in January 1896 on the grounds of her husband’s “opiate addition and abandonment” and was awarded custody of her son.⁵⁴ Georgia went to live with her mother and her two uncles. She lived with them her whole life and never remarried. (She represented herself in censuses and city directories as a widow after her former husband died in 1903.) According to her death certificate, she died of a coronary occlusion at the age of 75.

4. **William Guess Baird** (11 December 1858 – 15 October 1935) He never married. Known as “Tiny”, he was shown in the 1860 census as “Charles William”, but was evidently renamed for George William Guess, a Confederate colonel, Dallas mayor, and Masonic grand master who was a close friend of George Baird's. (See the “letters” document, which includes a lengthy letter written in the field from Col. Guess to George Baird in 1862.) He is listed as “William G.” Baird in the 1870 and later censuses, and in several Dallas City directories. The Fowler Bible and his death certificate show his full name.

Tiny never married. The Dallas city directories list him as a clerk in 1883, a traveling salesman in 1884, a pawnbroker in 1886, a salesman in 1889, a bartender in 1891, a salesman in 1900, a traveling salesman in 1915, and the president of the Merchants Produce Company in 1924. He lived with his mother in the 1880 census. He seems to have lived in Dallas with his divorced sister Mary Emma Brown after the death of his mother, being listed with her in the city directory of 1893-4 and in the 1900 through 1930 censuses. In 1910 both he and his brother Robert are in her household, both listed as traveling salesmen for wholesale produce. He is listed in his sister's household as late as

⁵³ Dallas Marriage Book L, p76.

⁵⁴ The Dallas Journal, Volume 44 (1999), p41.

the 1930 census, when he was the owner of a produce company.

He died in Dallas on 15 October 1935 and was buried in the Oakland Cemetery two days later. His death certificate gives the cause of death as “cerebral hemorrhage” and his occupation as “retired produce dealer”. The informant was his niece Georgia Fowler, who listed his final residence address as her own, 5420 Columbia St. He shares a cemetery stone with his sister Emma and brother Robert.

5. **Lee Baird** (13 July 1861 – 21 November 1884) He never married and died somewhat mysteriously at the age of 23. In 1880 he was living with his mother and the city directory shows him working at Texas Baptist. The 1881 and 1883 directories list him as a jeweler working for John Fischer and living with his mother. In the city directory of 1884 he was listed as a clerk for Richard Cohn, a Dallas speculator and moneylender. The family Bible shows his death later that year. Since this predates death certificates by several decades, we do not know how he died.
6. **Thomas Walker Baird** (13 October 1864 – 10 May 1865) According to the Bible, he and Robert Edwin Baird were twins, and Thomas died as an infant.
7. **Robert Edwin Baird** (13 October 1864 – 25 October 1912) He also never married. The Dallas city directories show him living with his mother in 1880, clerking for Meyer Sues’ dry goods establishment. In 1884 he was manager of A. J. Kraus. In 1886 he ran Robert E. Baird, Pawnbrokers on Main Street, employing his brother William. In the 1889 through 1892 city directories, he was operating Stanley & Baird grocers on Ross Street in partnership with Charles R. Stanley. From 1896 through 1900 he was a traveling salesman for Nicholas Nigro & Co., a wholesale produce supplier. In the 1900 census he was living in a rooming house on Main St. in Dallas, his occupation listed as traveling salesman. In the 1901 city directory he was listed as a travel agent for A. F. Dechman, but in 1904 he was a traveling salesman for A. A. Jackson & Co., the same wholesaler for whom his brother had been clerking since 1897. In 1910 he and his brother William were living with their sister Emma Brown, both listed in the city directory as traveling salesmen of wholesale produce. In 1912 he was again listed as a traveling salesman.

Robert, though a resident of Dallas, died in Longview, Gregg County, Texas according to his estate records. He was 48. His will, dated 20 January 1912 and probated in Dallas later that year, left all of his estate to his brother William.⁵⁵ The estate consisted of a half-interest in two houses in Dallas, one of which he directed to be sold to pay in full for the other.⁵⁶ The contingent beneficiary was his sister Emma Brown. If both his brother and sister predeceased him, the estate was to go to “my niece Georgia B. Fowler.”

⁵⁵ Dallas County Probate Case #4313. The record includes his death date and place.

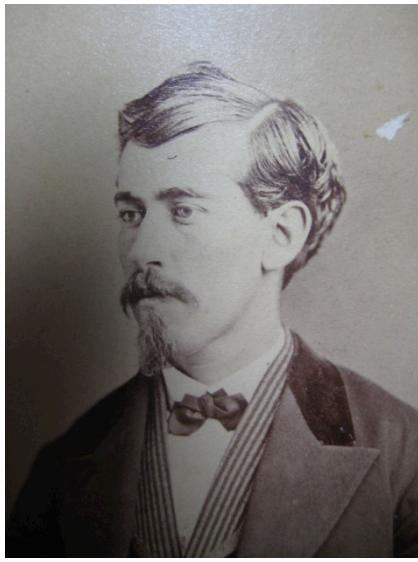
⁵⁶ The half interest in a house at 3208 San Jacinto was to be sold to pay for the other half-interest in a house at 5420 Columbia Avenue. I did not check to determine if he owned either house in partnership with a sibling.



Map of Dallas in 1872. The second north-south street from the left is Houston. The fourth cross-street from the top is Elm. The Baird house is depicted on the northwest corner of Houston and Elm. The grocery was two blocks east of the house on Elm.



George Rolando Baird and Emma Stewart



Another photo believed to be Roe Baird



Photos believed to be George Washington Baird and Mary Elizabeth Traughber.

