

The Giddings News

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REV. BIRKMANN WRITES OF LEXINGTON AND SOME OF THE PEOPLE THERE AS HE KNEW THEM OVER FIFTY YEARS AGO

During my first stay at Fedor from 1876 to 1879, it sometimes happened that people came from Lexington to attend services at Fedor. Dr. M. S. Merchant, the dentist, told me in later years that he had occasionally come from Lexington with some acquaintances, to hear a German sermon. Some came to see the congregation that was increasing so remarkably and that was evidently taking such great interest in their church affairs.

There was also a small number of Danish people who had at that early date come to Lexington and had rented or sought other occupations. These Danes were Lutherans and when there was a child born in their families, they went to the pastor at Fedor to have it christened, or they asked the pastor to come to their homes for this purpose. So I was sometimes asked to visit these Danes at or near Lexington. I also preached at intervals to them in the English language, and once I preached a sermon in the old Baptist church at Lexington. Some of the names I can remember: Mr. Schutt and one Mr. Molbeck, the saddler. I also preached in the Danish settlement eight miles or so northwest of the town. Mr. Vittrup living there and Mr. Soerensen and half a dozen others. I preached in the home of Vittrup Christmas Day 1877. He later moved to Rock-fale, but still brought the children born to him to Fedor for baptism.

Mr. Soerensen's wife, about fifty years ago, was accidentally shot in the hip. The young man who had been so unfortunate as to wound her in cleaning his pistol, immediately went to the doctor and the preacher.

Dr. Baine in Lexington got there before me, and I had to make the trip on muleback, as my horse had absented himself from the pasture. I had to ride twenty miles in the July sun before reaching Mr. Soerensen's home. However, I was glad to be informed there that the doctor had given good hopes of Mrs. Soerensen's recovery. And she did recover within a few weeks.

I have always thought the situation of the town of Lexington quite pretty. Coming out of the somewhat dreary and monotonous post oak and brush which accompanied you all the way from Fedor at that time, you would see a fine large prairie before you, and the little town on its border would make a fine picture.

And there was some romantic history, if you would hear the older people tell about their time. Mr. Burns had been living at Lexington before coming to Giddings. He once told me that he had seen in a family living at or near town a number of letters written by Henry Clay, the great American statesman. These people probably had been relatives of his.

Then there was the place of Captain Shaw whom I did not know. His son, however, Travis Shaw once visited me and took dinner with me. The Shaw home is a historic place and ought to be preserved if still in existence. Lexington was a town of some renown at least twenty years before Giddings was placed on the map. A certain Baptist minister has written a book on the history of the Baptist church in this state. He says in the book that the Baptists had a conference in Lexington in the middle of the fifties, almost eighty years ago. There was quite a number of people present, and they spent several days in Lexington.

I made the acquaintance of the Dixons who had a store in the old town, and, of course, I also knew well the later Dixons, the one who was a Senator for a term or two, and his brother who kept the store in the new town. The Dixons had come

from Mississippi, a good state before the Civil War. As Mr. Joe Bailey said, that he was born in Mississippi, a good state to be born in, and that he was raised in Texas. But the old Dixons whom I learned to know in Lexington, were also raised in Mississippi, and were fine gentlemen.

On the other side of the street from Dixons was the store of Hester and Konzelmann. I knew them well, and have been invited by them to their homes. Each of these men had built for himself a remarkably stately house, and as fine as any in town, or a little finer. These were surrounded by flower gardens and trees, which were like small parks. Business evidently had been good, and they were in good circumstances, financially. Mr. Hester told me that a few years before he had with his family visited Europe and seen the great World's Exposition in Vienna, and was still very enthusiastic in describing what he had seen there. Mr. Hester at that time had four or five children, the oldest of them already having much practice in playing the piano which was there in the room where we had our dinner.

I later saw Mr. Nic. Hester, of whom I am here relating, and he always spoke kindly and seemed to take delight in conversing. He was of a lively disposition, and well informed generally. In 1889 when Fedor dedicated its remodeled church building, Mr. Hester was one of those attending our celebration. This was the last time I saw him, for he died only a month or two later. I was very sorry to hear of his departure, and I sympathized with his stricken family who had lost their father in the prime of life. Later on, I learned to know several of the men who married daughters of Mr. Hester, as Bayliss Fletcher, with whom I had many pleasant "confabs," and Mr. Engelhart, and Mr. Schlosshan who is still living in Giddings. But these do not belong in this sketch which is intended to refer to men I knew in or near Lexington fifty or more years ago.

I am not writing this with the idea of offering any valuable contribution to the history of our Lee County. But this little article may be of interest to some who have a recollection of

persons mentioned, and every little helps. I want to encourage others to write of their own knowledge and experience of former days.

Some articles are transcribed in the Birkman blog at

http://www.wendishresearch.org/blog_gotthilf_birkmann/?e=38