

John Wesley Roark born August 15, 1841 died June 7, 1928 buried at Edgewood Cemetery Lancaster, Texas (near Dallas)

Permelia Britanna Conner Roark born November 13, 1846 died November 30, 1928 buried at Edgewood Cemetery Lancaster, Texas (near Dallas)



Life and Service of John Wesley Roark (Copied from his long hand copy)

At the request of my children, I consent to give these facts for their benefit and pleasure.

I was born in the 10th district of Hamilton Co., Tenn. on the banks of a little stream called "Grass Hopper".

At about the age of three years my mother taught me that there were two ruling spirits in the world: one, she called, the "Good Man" and the other the "Buggar Man" The Good Man ruled everything after the counsel of His own will and desired that all people should be good. The Buggar Man was in opposition to Him, G.M., and if I followed his counsel He would lead me to a bad end and finally burn me with "Fire and brimstone". At this early age, it was my desire to follow the Good Man and be obedient, but the Buggar Man soon held out some inducements to me to go the other way.

One of my earliest jobs, when I was about four years old, was to "mind the gap" with an older brother, Jim, while the men hauled in the corn. He sent me back for fire and potatoes, which had just been dug, that we could roast. When I was just about half way to the gap, I discovered that my pants were afire. I throwed down my potatoes and shed my pants and they burned in the middle of the road. I slipped back to the house in my shirt tail with a hole burned in it. I found another pair without being discovered but when the men came and discovered the potatoes in the road and the "leavins" of my pants, they raised an alarm and the secret was out.

In the spring the following year we had a high water and the folks were interested in the high water and not noticing me; so I took my dogs, three or four, and concluded to go up on the hill. When I got up there I

discovered a big lake in the field that had come from the falling rain. I began to amuse myself by throwing chunks in and the dogs would swim in and bring them out to me. When I came to the house, the women were crying and not knowing I had come up, Jim hollowed, "Here he is." They had thought I had drowned and had searched down to the old Mill race.

A little later Pap had me a pair of shoes made out of picked leather. I took them off to play and lost them. Years later when Pap went to move the fence, he found them in the fence lock in good condition.

Old Squire Cornwell taught an arithmetic school. Pap signed Jim, but I was too young to go as I could not read although I went and listened at the lectures and became a favorite of the Old Squire. As he would give off the rules as "16 oz. make a lb.", I would say it too, but I did not learn the multiplication tables.

Once when he asked a question, which I do not remember, none of the class could answer, but the old Squire said, "John can tell us" which I did. This buoyed me up and made me want to learn.

About this time Old Squire Blackburn bought the Gamble place adjoining our place. He had four studious boys, good to learn, and we played with them and left off the rough set.

They then together hired a teacher to teach a school where Salem now stands. His students followed him from Bradly County. They had a great moralizing influence over that community and did much good. I count this as a stepping stone in my life toward higher ground.

Jessie Blackburn, his son, one of the best boys I ever knew, taught us a good school and was my first teacher to have devotional Exercises. I completed the arithmetic under him. We had a grand exhibition at his close out and I delivered a declamation on: "The Contribution of America to the World" very little of which I remember now. Who can

imagine the shock to the world if the Atlantic was no longer transversable!"

I made a crop the following year with a bull tongue plough (plow) and hoe. Made a pretty big crop especially a big oat crop and thrashed it with a "ground hog thrasher".

That Fall before the corn was gathered, Burket came after me to go to Georgetown to school. Pap agreed for me to go. Wood Hale hooked up the big speckled yoke of oxen, loaded in my bed, some cooking utensils, and qt. bottle full of ground coffee, but they wouldn't let me make it when I got there, said I was healthier without it. I took plenty of flour and meal--everything was homemade then; there was no store bought goods then. Nothing came out of the store to eat and very little to wear. I took a gallon jug full of molasses, a ham of meat and whatever Mother said to take, I took but had no idea what it took to keep a house.

When I arrived, I went into the dormitory for boys -- a hewed log cabin with brick chimney, one door and two windows. The girls boarded in private homes. Several of the boys had not arrived but Rick Grissum, Mark Miller and Bill Taylor were there, and W. P. Solomon came later also Bill Runnion.

A heap of the boys had store clothes but mine was not so. I felt a little embarrassed but can see now it was best for me.

Prof had a bugle and a certain man to blow it on time. "You are all handy here and you can be here two minutes after it blows", he would say. I went there with a purpose to improve myself, determined to obey his rough discipline which was rough and rigid but good to them who obeyed. I never got a short word.

Every other Friday he required us to write an Essay and he assigned the subject.

We had two Literary Societies, Philmathian, a lover of mathematics, Philogian, a lover of learning. I was a member of the Philogians. Jim Chambers was leader of the Philmathians. Edd Donn was leader of the Philogians. Both were training for Preachers and both made preachers too.

About the first or second meeting of the society after I got there, he gave me the subject of Mathematics. I knew a declamation on Mathematics and asked for a different subject. "I gave you Mathematics" was his stern reply and I took it. The Philogians were behind but when I read this essay, they came piling over to the Philogians and we stayed ahead the rest of the term. Even the teacher complimented