

Tom H. Gann



About forty-five years ago, a Lufkin surveyor, Dean Leggett, who was located in the same real estate office complex where I worked, crossed the hall and presented a legal description he had typed of a 129-acre tract involved in a tax-free exchange. The words “King’s Highway” were included as the west boundary line. This was the first time those words were identified in my mind with any property in Angelina County.

As a young real estate broker, I did not recognize the historical importance of the “King’s Highway” at that time. I remembered it years later, however, as I developed a taste for family history inspired by the Gann Historical Society and Library, Inc. in Johnson City, Tennessee. My father, Woody Gann of Lufkin, was one of its founders in 1989.

Dean Leggett mentioned that Kenneth Johnson with the Angelina County Appraisal District had a folder with some information on the King’s Highway. Although the real estate business causes you to constantly mix with attorneys, title

companies, surveyors, appraisal districts, and banks, the contacts are about business and not historical research. In these last seven years, Kenneth Johnson became my contact for details about county maps, legal descriptions, flood maps, topographic maps, property owners [old and new], the discovery of locations from old city maps, old names in deeds on creeks and springs, and city maps from 1882, 1888, 1914, 1925, and 1961. Most of all, I acknowledge Kenneth for the many hours I sat at his office and worked at the computer searching for the gems of history.

Abbott Hargraves was a surveyor who worked on numerous assignments of historical pleasure after he retired. His expertise in combing the details on every page of his deed research included five other counties in addition to his concentration on Nacogdoches and Angelina counties. His attention to historical detail on the 1836 map of Nacogdoches and the people who lived on Pilar Street was amazing. He loved what he was doing and worked with me until he was ninety-four years old.

Bob Skiles's emails, texts, articles, maps, and complete sharing of his information, and his assistance were immeasurable for me even before Gary and I started this project.

Emily Hyatt and Jonathan Gerland at The History Center have endured my many questions and requests with eagerly returned information. The Texas General Land Office with Kevin Klaus, and Mary Waite, and its Spanish Collection with Brian Stauffer have always gone beyond the call of duty with each visit, call, or

email. Locally, Dr. Tom Middlebrook assisted with his fatherly leadership techniques and took the time to encourage excellence by example. Special thanks to David Hoffpauir with Sam Houston State University for sharing an information diamond in a Texas Supreme Court Case from 1845.

Rob Tompkins, a friend and “landman”, has shared months of cumulative time at the Angelina County Courthouse’s Deeds and Records section searching for any and everything. Heather Rhodes and Carol Donaldson, with GANN MEDFORD Real Estate, Inc., were inexhaustible with their years of support, time, and experience.

Renee Benn Lee with the Texas Department of Transportation supplied three separate years of the first asphalt artery through Angelina County with Texas Highway 35 from the timeframe 1918-1930 that were being proposed, as built, and improved with a by-product of learning more about some older roads it was replacing.

The individuals at Skelton Slusher Barnhill Watkins Wells PLLC, in concert with Claudia Cook and Debbie Squires at Community Title, were indispensable in the discovery of information on old maps, surveys, old property owners, and legal descriptions in Angelina County. With their contributions, new maps can now be drawn of the two paths through Angelina County since 1691.

I would like to express my immense appreciation to Gary L. Pinkerton for agreeing to share our research in addition to his added methods of computer-enhanced techniques in mapping, word searching, and sharing of information. His ability to gather a wide range of information, assimilate it into specific dates, subjects, and multiple sources, and then retrieve it with ease has been nothing short of impressive.