

The Founder of Bartonville

by Jim Morriss

It is a good thing for us to be aware of the people who first made their homes here. They survived and even thrived under severe hardships; but that is the way the world used to be. While many of us do realize that we are fortunate to be the beneficiaries of our early settlers, we don't always know exactly who we should be thankful for.

Most of our North Texas communities are named for prominent features that are found here. Towns such as Double Oak, Highland Village and Flower Mound are good examples. Also a few cities like Argyle and Roanoke are named for other places. One exception is the Town of Bartonville, which was named for a real person who once lived here. But who is this guy who has a last name that joins Houston, Austin, and Denton on the map of Texas? It is fairly easy to find references in our libraries or on the internet with claims that Bartonville, Texas was named for "T. Bent Barton" who once had a store here. Unfortunately, there is no real evidence that there ever was a person named T. Bent Barton. The early settler for whom the town was named has now been proven to be **Bentley B. Barton** and many details of his life here have been discovered.

In the summer of 1806 a baby boy was born in the frontier settlement of Bowling Green, Kentucky. The pioneer parents were named Barton and they decided to name their son Bentley. Like most of the people living in America in the 1800's, Bentley became a farmer. He married a Kentucky girl named Martha Pearson in 1829 and the two moved west to Illinois. They heard about good land available in the new state of Missouri and the two moved to Lafayette County which is in the western part of the state. The Barton's raised a large family having 14 sons and 1 daughter (that we know of.) At least one of the older sons departed for California to seek gold when it was discovered there in 1849 but he evidently didn't find any and came back to Missouri.

When the Civil War started, the "Show Me State" was divided. Most of the cities along the Mississippi River were pro-Union. But, the farming communities in the rest of the state were often sympathetic to the South. The Barton family favored the Confederacy and Bentley was said to have served with the 3rd Missouri Cavalry Regiment. At least three of his sons: Thomas, Joseph and Benjamin Barton joined Company I. of the 5th Missouri Cavalry. This unit was also called "Shelby's Iron Brigade" because of their unyielding ferocity in battle. At the conclusion of the war, Shelby's group never surrendered to the Union Army. Most of them defiantly fled south west to Mexico. It is well known that after the war many Confederate

soldiers did get to Mexico and even further into Central and South America. There were also many of them that found refuge in Texas until the aftermath of the Civil War and Reconstruction subsided. Evidently the Barton brothers wrote home and gave glowing accounts of what Texas had to offer.

Thomas Barton (b: Nov. 3, 1840) had a twin brother, **James M. Barton**, who was single. James traveled to Texas and in 1867 he married Harriet Simson. James and his wife settled down in north east Tarrant County in a place called Grapevine Springs. Thomas Barton did return to Missouri and in 1871 he married Miss. Susan Olds. Thomas and Susan started farming and raising their own family in Missouri. Another brother, **Bentley Ballard Barton**, (b: Feb. 7, 1849) visited James in Texas where he met the daughter of one of the farmers who lived near his big brother. In 1877 Bentley (or B.B. as he preferred to be called) married Martha Catherine Coleman, and the newlyweds started a farm a few miles north of Denton Creek. Back in Missouri, Thomas and Susan must have been hearing good reports from Grapevine that "things are better in Texas." In 1879 Thomas, Susan and their son and three daughters moved to this area also.

This was a time in our history when Denton County was going through a remarkable transformation. Rail roads were being built through out the state. Rail service started in Dallas in 1872. In Fort Worth it was 1876; in Gainesville, 1879 and in Denton it was 1881. B.B. Barton was probably one of the first in this area to fully realize what this would mean to the people who lived here. Before there was rail service, the area consisted of subsistence farms. People grew whatever they needed. It was pointless to grow anything else because transportation costs were so high that there was no profit in selling crops, even those crops that every farmer was capable of producing in abundance. After the rail roads came, people started to raise what they called cash crops. With our mild winters and long growing season they could grow cotton, wheat, cattle and horses and find buyers in Lewisville, Grapevine or Argyle; where ever there was a rail road terminal. Farmers who had been just managing to survive now had a little money to spend. Furthermore, all kinds of manufactured goods were suddenly much easier to find and cheaper to buy. Better farm implements were now available as were items like cast iron stoves, plate glass windows and milled lumber. But nothing transformed our area more than barbed wire.

James and Hattie Barton raised their family of nine kids on their 322 acre farm that was located just east of Main Street in Grapevine, Texas. Thomas and

Susan Barton bought a 50 acre farm between Grapevine and Denton, then moved to a 100 acre place where they raised their seven children. The three Barton brothers must have had some successful years farming here as all were able buy some very good farm land as it became available. While twins, James and Thomas, seemed content to work their farms B.B. Barton was also looking for better land and other means of income. In the early 1880's he acquired several tracts of land located on the "Loving Branch," which was then a small but reliable spring-fed creek. On the spot where the road from Grapevine to Denton met the road from Lewisville to Justin, B.B. Barton built a small general store. There is no way to know exactly when the store opened but by early 1882, the area was referred to as "Barton's Mills." However, the area soon became known as just "**Bartonville**," a name that has persisted for more than 125 years.

By all accounts, the general store that was operated by B.B. and Kitty Barton was doing quite well in the 1880's. B.B. stocked many necessities that farmers needed so those living nearby could avoid the wagon ride to and from Denton, Lewisville or Grapevine. B.B. acquired a cotton gin as well as mills needed to convert farmer's wheat and corn into flour and meal. In 1886 B.B. received a permit from the government to run a post office in his store. He was the first Postmaster of the town of Bartonville. As the community grew, so did the Bartonville store. The Barton's had five children, three of which were born in Bartonville. But one thing that the growing town did not have, and was unlikely to ever possess, was a railroad terminal. B.B. seemed to have a strong conviction that the best business opportunities would always be close to railroad tracks. In March of 1890 he sold his store, resigned his position as Postmaster and moved his wife and five children to the Parker County community of Adell, Texas.

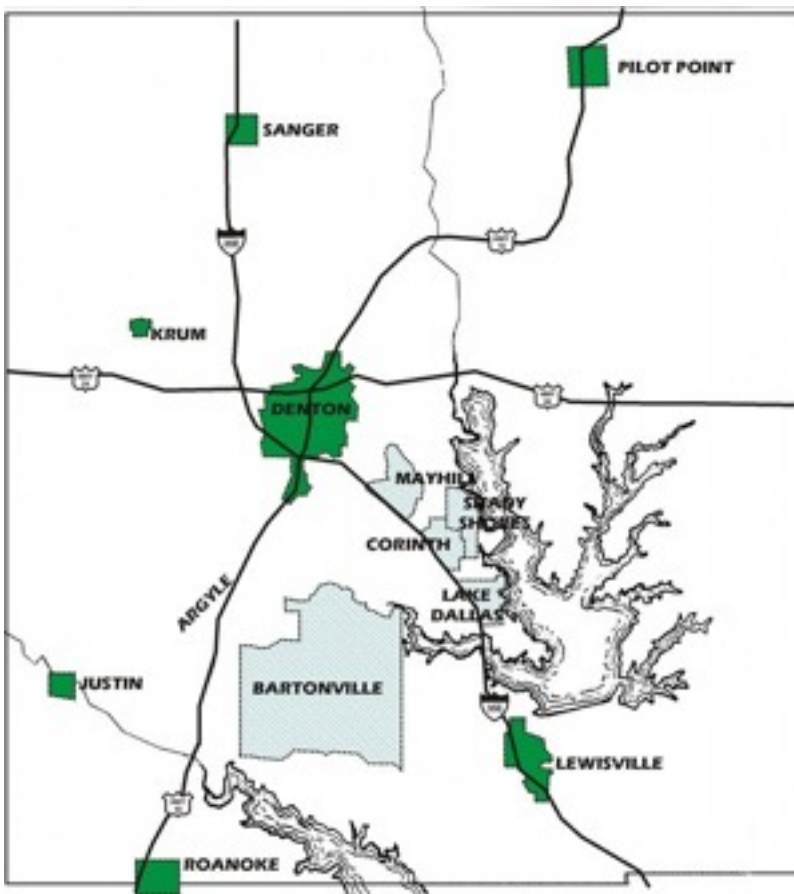
While living in Adell, B. B. opened a new store and Kitty had another son. B.B. also became the Postmaster of his new community. However, four years later the family moved to the nearby village of Advance, Texas where B.B. also had a store and was also the Postmaster. Then in 1899 B.B. sold his property and moved his growing family to El Reno in the Indian Territory. There in El Reno, Kitty Barton gave birth to their seventh child. Soon thereafter, B.B.

decided to move back to Texas but Kitty and her seven children remained in Oklahoma. We can not know for sure but it is very easy to believe that Kitty was getting tired of the continuous moving. With their marriage dissolved, B.B. Barton soon relocated to Paradise, Texas in Wise County, where in May of 1904, he and W.T. Waggoner formed a partnership. They started a store and cotton gin which appears to have been quite successful. In February of the following year, B.B. married a widow named Mrs. Edith S. Jay. Two months later, on April 7, 1905, B.B. Barton died of a stroke.

Kitty Barton and her children moved to Chickasha, Oklahoma and apparently led happy lives in the new state. Kitty ran a boarding house there. Two of her daughters became school teachers. Another daughter was a book keeper. Two of the sons started an auto parts store and garage and worked as merchants and mechanics.

The town that B.B. Barton started in 1881 continued to grow through the first part of the 20th century. A man named T.B. Breeding operated the Bartonville store for over 25 years and replaced the original building with a larger two-story structure. Other businesses were started in Bartonville with at least two churches and for a while, I.O.O.F. Lodge #367 was a fixture here. Then in the 1920's and 1930's declining prices for wheat and cotton caused many farmers to leave the area. But the few families that stubbornly remained kept the identity of Bartonville intact. However, in 1952 the completion of Lake Grapevine cut off the close connection that Bartonville had to the city on the other side of the creek.

Then in 1960 a hostile annexation attempt by the City of Irving created a strong spirit of defiance in the residents of the southern part of Denton County. On September 10, 1960 the residents overwhelmingly voted to officially incorporate the Town of Bartonville; and it was then larger in area than any other city in the county. A few years later, in May of 1964, a dispute over the school system resulted in the town's citizens voting to disincorporate Bartonville. However, the nucleus of the old town remained a cohesive sub-division and in October of 1973 a much smaller Town of Bartonville was re-incorporated.



At one time, in the 1960's, the Town of Bartonville was the largest incorporated city and dominated the southern half of Denton County

Jim Morriss, who is a former mayor of Bartonville, located the gravesite of B.B. Barton in Paradise, Texas.