

MARTIN VARNER, TEXAS PIONEER: 1785-1844

CHAPTER 1. FAYETTE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA. Martin Varner's grandfather, Martin Varner Sr., migrates to German Township, Fayette County, Pennsylvania in 1772 and settles on a 400 acre homestead on the Monongahela River. Martin Varner's father, Martin Varner Jr., marries Elizabeth Reich on 15 March 1782. Martin Varner is born there on 3 March 1785. Martin Varner Sr. dies there in December 1789.

CHAPTER 2. WARREN COUNTY, OHIO. Martin Varner Jr. travels by flatboat down the Monongahela and Ohio Rivers to Hamilton Township, Warren County, Ohio where he purchases a 600 acre tract in October 1791. He works as a chain man on a survey party location land on the Little Miami River in April 1792. Martin Varner Jr. moves his family to his land in Warren County, Ohio and settles at Mount's Station in 1795. Varner sells this land and moves to a new homestead near Harlan Township, Middleboro, Warren County, Ohio about 1800.

CHAPTER 3. JONESBORO, TEXAS. Martin Varner and several companions travel by flatboat down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to Arkansas Territory in 1815. He meets Henry and John Jones near the White River and the group travels to Texas where they start a trading post on the Red River that becomes known as Jonesboro. Martin Varner marries Elizabeth Eveline English in 1818 and settles in Oklahoma near the Kiamichi River. Soldiers from Fort Smith, Arkansas Territory burned their homes and evict 200 settlers from Oklahoma in the fall of 1819. Varner and the settlers cross the Red River and settle at Jonesboro. Varner hears about Austin's colony in the spring of 1821 and makes plans to join Stephen F. Austin.

CHAPTER 4. AUSTIN'S FIRST COLONY. In October 1821, Martin Varner joins a caravan of settlers and travels to Washington on the Brazos where they met Stephen F. Austin. Varner settles near the present town of Independence, Washington County, Texas, in January 1822. Mexico declared its independence from Spain and Austin must travel over 1000 miles to Mexico City to renew his Spanish Charter with the new Mexican Government.

CHAPTER 5. BRAZORIA COUNTY, TEXAS. Austin returns in 1823 and advises that each family will receive a league (4428 acres) and a labor (177 acres). Martin Varner selected his labor in San Felipe de Austin, the new capitol of Austin's colony and moved there in November 1823. He returned to Ohio in April 1824, probably to visit his father who was in poor health. Varner moved to his league at West Columbia, Brazoria County, Texas in the spring of 1825.

CHAPTER 6. VARNER PLANTATION. Martin Varner cleared land and raised cattle, hogs, cotton, corn, and sugar cane on his new plantation on the Brazos, River. Varner and Israel Waters established the first distillery in Austin's colony and produced rum from sugar cane molasses for export to New Orleans. They sent a sample bottle of rum to Stephen F. Austin in July 1829.

CHAPTER 7. THE BATTLE OF VELASCO. Martin Varner participated in the Battle of Velasco on 26 June 1832. A force of 185 Texas volunteers attacked Fort Velasco, manned by 196 Mexican Soldiers. The fort surrendered after the Texas sharpshooters wounded many of the Mexican soldiers as they were loading their cannons. A spring flood and cholera epidemic devastated Brazoria County in

1833. Martin Varner sold his plantation to Columbus Patton in 4 April 1834 for \$13,000. He remained in Brazoria County for two years after the sale, probably to dispose of his livestock.

CHAPTER 8. TEXAS INDEPENDENCE. Martin Varner was still in Brazoria County when Texas declared its Independence from Mexico on 2 March 1836. Varner leads his family to safety during the “Runaway Scrape” when the Texas citizens retreated eastward ahead of the advancing Mexican army. Martin Varner turns back and joins the Texas army at Harrisburg on 19 April 1836. He was assigned to the rear guard at Harrisburg during the Battle of San Jacinto on 21 April 1836.

CHAPTER 9. FORT LYDAY. Martin Varner served three months in the Texas army and was discharged at Camp Victoria on 19 July 1836. Varner traveled to Lamar County, Texas and rejoined his family. He purchased a 1700 acre land claim and settled east of Fort Lyday. In 1838 Varner traveled back to Brazoria County where he purchased eight land certificates for 5000 acres from Texas veterans of the Battle of San Jacinto.

CHAPTER 10. FIRST SETTLER IN WOOD COUNTY. Martin Varner cleared the first road into present Wood County in 1840. He built a cabin and moved his family to Wood County, Texas in the spring of 1841. Varner used his land certificates to claim over 6000 acres in ten tracts in Wood County.

CHAPTER 11. SIMON GONZALES. Martin Varner and his only son, Stephen Austin Varner, were involved in an altercation with their neighbor, Simon Gonzales, about money that Varner had loaned to Gonzales. Stephen Varner and Gonzales died on 11 February 1844 and Martin Varner died on 14 February 1844 from wounds suffered in the altercation. Elizabeth English Varner died on 25 January 1852 and the Varner land was divided between Varner’s five living daughters and the heirs of Helen Varner Hendrix.

CHAPTER 12. THE VARNER-HOGG CONNECTION. Governor James Stephen Hogg’s involvement with the Haines family and his first political efforts in Wood County are detailed. Hogg’s interest in early Texas oil speculation resulted in his purchase of the Varner Plantation in 1901. Ima Hogg’s interest in the Varner Plantation and historical preservation resulted in her donation of 100 acres of the Varner Plantation with the Patton home to the State of Texas in 1958 as the Varner-Hogg State Park.

CHAPTER 13. JACOB WERNER, THE IMMIGRANT. Jacob Werner immigrated from the Palatinate region of Germany to England and then to New York in 1709. He settled in the Schoharie Valley west of Albany, New York. In 1728 he joined a group of German settlers and emigrated to Berks County, Pennsylvania.

CHAPTER 14. MARTIN WERNER, BERKS COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA. Jacob Werner’s son, Martin Werner, Sr., settles in West Brunswick Township, Berks County Pennsylvania in the “New Purchase” about 1750. Martin Werner, Jr. is born there in 1760. Several researchers have speculated that the Varner family in Fayette County, Pennsylvania are descendants of the Werner family from Berks County, Pennsylvania. However, no proof has been found to verify this speculation.