

# The Passing of a Pioneer

*Brownwood Banner-Bulletin, December 10, 1925*

In the death of Mrs. Keziah Lee, widow of the late Brooks W. Lee, at the ripe age of 85, Brown county and Texas loses a character whose impression will remain in a permanent way upon the material institutions of this country.

There are few women now living who occupied for years so strenuous a place in the planting of the seeds of civilization in the western wilderness as did Mrs. Lee, and looking back over the times in which she lived and moved and filled her place so well, one of the manifold wonders of the Divine authority is again seen, in that he endowed such women with strength beyond their sisters of the present day. It was a part of the Divine plan, that the men and women who took up their abode in the wilds, among savage animals and among still wilder men—who lived constantly in the firing line of danger—should be men and women of heroic mould, such as Brooks W. Lee, and his good wife, whose death brings those of the present generation to a brief study of her sterling character and splendid life, and the work of that life.

Keziah Adams, daughter of Ichabod Adams and Caroline Adams, was born in Waverly, Tennessee, March 30th, 1840. When she was born Andrew Jackson, the hero of the Battle of New Orleans, was president of the United States and Texas was a Republic, with Sam Houston as president, and the capital of the Republic at old Washington on the Brazos with not a public road, not a railroad, not a postoffice, and in most cases except where Indians were dangerous, the nearest neighbor, twenty to fifty miles distant. Since Keziah Adams was a barefoot, laughing tousel-headed child in old Tennessee, there have been twenty-three presidents, most of whom have served two terms. When she was a child there were not more than half a dozen states organized west of the Mississippi river. There was not a foot of railroad west of the Mississippi river.

When Keziah Adams was 10 years old her parents moved to Texas, like thou-

sands of other Tennesseans, and settled in Henderson county, not far from the old fort where the tragedy which swept Cynthia Ann Parker into Indian captivity was enacted in later years. Many people came from Tennessee to Texas. Take the map of Texas and look over the old list of counties: the pioneer counties of this state, and it is easy to tell from whence their first settlers came—Polk, Shelby, Jackson, Bell, Rusk, Jefferson, Crockett, an east Texas town, and Crockett, a west Texas county, Bowie, Tyler and many others quite too numerous to mention.

From Henderson county the family moved to McLennan county, and there Keziah Adams, who had grown into lovely young womanhood, met and married Brooks W. Lee, a fine fellow, who had arrived in that part of the state from one of the states in the north, having made the trip alone and on horseback, through what was then the Indian Nation, and is now Oklahoma. Two years later, in 1857, Brooks W. Lee and his bride, moved to what is now Brown county, about the time the county was organized, and liking the lovely valley of Pecan bayou and the situation generally they halted, built a cabin of poles and anchored themselves to a land from which only death was to call them in future years. Their life and career was the same in substance as the life and career of others who moved into the lovely valley after them. It would be impossible as well as a lack of appreciation, to attempt to write about the good woman whose death has just occurred, with the life and work of her husband, Brooks W. Lee, because his name and his work is inseparably connected with the early permanent history of Brown county and the central west.

Brooks W. Lee once decided to build for himself and his posterity a permanent abode in what came to be Brown county, and so we find that in the year 1858 when the State Rangers were organized he was among the first to enroll for service in case he was needed. The request to send Rangers to this part

of Texas, or to permit their organization, was made upon the legislature of the new state, by Ichabod Adams, father-in-law of Brooks W. Lee, who had also moved to this part of Texas. Fifteen Rangers were apportioned to Brown county—Brooks W. Lee, G. H. Adams, A. E. Adams, H. C. Knight, George Isaacks, J. S. Harris, Dick Germany, B. J. Marshall, Willis Holloway, W. L. Williams, Cyrus Ford, Avery Toby, Steve Derrick, John Herrige and one other man, whose name is not recalled. Brooks W. Lee was placed in charge of the Ranger force, and he led his men in many Indian raids and not a few fights with the Indians.

Fourteen men from Brown county were in the Totten Creek Indian fight. This fight was wholly unwarranted as the Indians were friendly and were making their way to Mexico. Brooks W. Lee and another man reconnoitered the situation carefully, before the attack was made and informed the Commander of the Texans that the Indians were friendly and the matter ought to be investigated. No heed was paid to the advice of Mr. Lee, and the result was that the whites were obliged to retreat after losing about twenty men. The white soldiers captured one old Indian and two Indian boys. The two boys were in charge of Brooks Lee, and when camp had been struck, after retreating from the scene of battle, the commanding officer ordered all three of the Indians shot. Somebody at once shot the old Indian man, but Brooks Lee stepped between the two Indian boys and declared that sure enough trouble would start, if any man attempted to kill the helpless boys. The boys seeing he was their defender clung to him for safety, and in the night he let them pass out of camp and rejoin their friends, who had abandoned their equipage, tents and everything and fled in a bitter storm of sleet and snow.

The records of 1859 show that Brooks W. Lee was a tax payer, along with the following other citizens: Ichabod Adams, W. M. Bennett, Abel Bowser, W. F. Brown, David Baugh, F. A. Baugh, P. C. Brewer, Levi Roberts, James Vaughn, G. W. Williams, J. J. Cox, Welcome W. Chandler, William Carver, S. R. Coggin,

M. J. Coggin, James H. Fowler, Thompson Fowler, Levi Fowler, Henry Skinner, Jasper Willis, W. L. Williams, Cyrus Ford, David S. Hanna, Jesse P. Hanna, John Hanna, T. D. Harris, Jesse S. Harris, W. B. Hamilton, George Issacks, George Tankersley, Gideon Willis, John Williams, John Jones, Brooks W. Lee, B. J. Marshall, J. B. McReynolds, R. Potter, Thomas J. Priddy, George Robbins, Frank Tankersley and Rupel Williams.

These facts are taken from the "Pocket Calculator," a booklet, which was written and compiled by Henry Ford, well known Brownwood citizen, who died some years ago.

The story of the useful activities of of Brooks W. Lee could be continued indefinitely, but this is enough to show the manner of man he was, and the important part he played in the early development of Brown county.

In 1866 the family moved to the Clear Creek community, 15 miles from Brownwood, it was in that home that Brooks W. Lee died on May 14, 1892. His widow who died yesterday, died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. J. M. Cochran, in the Brookesmith locality, only a few miles from the old home place.

Of the union formed in McLennon county in 1885, eleven children were born, seven of whom are still living; Mrs E. H. Estes, Sr., of Van Horn, Texas; G. L. Lee of Tucson, Arizona; Van Lee of El Tigre, Mexico; A. D. Lee, of Brownwood; Mrs. J. M. Cochran of Brookesmith; Brooks Lee Jr., of Somerton, Arizona; Jesse J. Lee of Holtsville, California. The children were all at the funeral with the exception of J. J. Lee and Van Lee.

In addition to raising and caring for her own children, Mrs. Lee also raised two grandchildren, Mrs. Ed Hennigan of Brookesmith and Mrs. Clyde McLean of Leedy, Oklahoma. She had 23 grandchildren and 44 great grandchildren. Two of the grandchildren attended the funeral, and also two great grandchildren.

Mrs. Lee has two brothers living—Harvey L. Adams of Brookesmith and Cabe Adams of Pierson, Mexico.

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# The Lee-Peacock Feud

*By T. U. Taylor, Dean of Engineering, University of Texas*

Governor J. W. Throckmorton (inaugurated August 13, 1866) was removed from office by the Federal Government on July 30, 1867; and E. M. Pease was appointed governor. Pease was called the "Reconstructive Governor." The appointment of E. M. Pease as Governor of Texas was a military measure, and it gave the negroes the "swell head", intensified the feeling between the sympathizers with the Southern cause and those who sympathized with the Union.

All over Texas there were many people that tried to currie favor with the new administration, and they were openly accused of beng turncoats. Many of them were appointed to office, and the term "scalawag" clung to them as long as they lived. The writer lived throughout the period and knows something about the ordeals through which the Southern people passed. Judges were displaced, sheriffs were ousted, new Justices of the Peace were appointed, and even constables were appointed by the wholesale. In some counties men refused to take office until the local citizens requested them to accept. This situation brought an intensity of feeling that prepared the fuel that a match would ignite.

In the southwestern part of Fannin county, in the northwestern part of Hunt, in the southeastern part of Grayson, and the northeastern part of Collin, there was a territory covered by thickets of various names. These thickets were known as the Mustang Thicket, Black Jack Thicket, Wild Cat Thicket, Jernigan Thicket, and various other local names. As late as 1877 there was an elliptical thicket about seven miles long of a maximum width of four miles just east of the present town of Leonard, into which few people had penetrated and through which only one man had ever gone. During the Civil War it was a rendezvous of deserters, shirkers and slackers. On one occasion a Federal officer sent a communication to the Mustang Thicket gang asking an interview.

An appointment was made; he was blindfolded on the prairie near the thicket and led into the camp of the gang; there unblindfolded he made a speech; urged them to come to the defense of the South. At the close of his impassioned address he asked all that would volunteer for the Southern cause to raise their hats. A few of them raised their hats half way. When asked what that meant, they replied that they would raise their hats high enough to fight Indians but not white people. The Confederate officer got no results and no reaction out of the Mustang Thicket gang.

In the northern part of one of these thickets whose southern boundary coincided with the southern boundary of Fannin county, Daniel W. Lee patented a tract of land in 1859 and there built a home and raised his family.

At the opening of the Civil War his son, Bob Lee, joined the forces of General Forrest and operated in Tennessee and Louisiana. An acquaintance of Bob Lee describes him as a very popular Southern man. He was handsome, tall, dark complected, and well-built; he generally wore a black suit, black felt hat with the brim turned up and a black plume in it. He held the rank of Captain during the Civil War and was sent by Forrest on many single-handed raids. He lived about three and one-half miles southwest of the present town of Leonard in Hunt county. He was a man of fine address, and made friends readily. He was not highly educated, but was one who chose his companions of culture and was able to adapt himself to a cultured environment. At the close of the Civil War he returned home with better clothes and a better horse and saddle than most of the Confederate soldiers. The Union League headquarters existed seven miles away at Pilot Grove, and it was inevitable that a man of Bob Lee's firey nature with his chivalric ideas, should soon clash with the members of the Union League.

The leader of the Union League around Pilot Grove was Lewis Peacock, whose home was one-half mile from the southeastern part of Grayson county and whose land bordered on Fannin county. The exact date of the bad feeling can hardly be placed, but by 1867 it was at fever heat; and during the latter part of February of that year, Bob Lee was at a blacksmith shop in Pilot Grove, Grayson county, when James W. Maddox, one of Peacock's men, shot him from the rear, the ball striking him on the bone behind the left ear. The ball glanced, which saved Lee's life. Dr. William Hartwell Pierce (who was born September 3, 1833,) was the practicing physician of the Pilot Grove neighborhood, and his home was in the verge of Pilot Grove. He took the wounded man to his home, dressed his wounds, nursed him, and was taking care of him, when on the 24th of February, 1867, Hugh Hudson, a member of the Peacock Clan, rode up to the Pierce residence, called him out, and talked to him for a few minutes. Dr. Pierce stood by the horse's head, rested his arm on the horse's mane, and conversed with Hudson for several minutes in a very friendly way. The conversation ended, Hudson turned his horse to leave, and Dr. Pierce started in his house. Hudson suddenly drew his six-shooter and shot Dr. Pierce in the back. He was carried in his house and died three days later, February 27, 1867.

Lee slowly recovered and returned to his home in the northern edge of Hunt county, about three-fourths of a mile from his father's residence in the southern edge of Fannin county.

Bob Lee always had money on his person and often displayed some twenty dollar gold pieces. His being well-dressed and displaying this large amount of money created the impression that he was wealthy. Lewis Peacock, Jim Maddox, Doc Wilson, and other members of the Union League conceived the idea of extorting money from Bob Lee. They came to his house one night, arrested him, and took him towards the town of Sherman, but stopped in the bottoms of the Choctaw Creek, four miles from

Sherman, for a parley. They had heard that the State had offered a reward for the arrest of Lee. They sent a messenger in to Sherman and ascertained that there was no such reward. However, they took Bob Lee's gold watch and \$200.00 in gold, and told him that he would have to pay them \$2,000 for his ransom. They permitted him to send word to his father, Daniel W. Lee, and to his brother, John Lee. They went to the Choctaw Bottoms to the lair of the kidnapers, had a conference with them, and were forced to sign a note for \$2,000. At first they tried to force Dan W. Lee and John Lee to bring them the \$2,000. The Lees tried this but failed to raise the money. Dan W. Lee then informed Peacock and his gang that if Bob Lee was set free they believed he would raise the money. They agreed to do this on condition that the Lees sign a note for the sum of \$2,000. In the bottoms of the Choctaw they made a pen out of a goose quill; John Lee made the ink out of gunpowder, and the kidnapers wrote a note for the amount and forced Bob and his father and brother to sign. It was a common report in the "Five Corner" section that Bob Lee was forced to sign the note with blood drawn from his own body. They then told Bob Lee to get the money and leave it at a certain place and they would give him back the note. He went to Bonham and consulted the famous and celebrated Robert H. Taylor, known far and wide as "Bob" Taylor. The Lees refused to pay the note, and suit was brought at Bonham, but Lee won his case.

The robbery in the Choctaw Bottom started the Lee-Peacock War that raged over portions of four counties. From that moment it was war to the knife and no quarter was given. During the latter part of 1867, the whole of 1868, and until June of 1869, the war raged; and all told something like fifty men were killed. The war really raged two years after Bob Lee's death. By the summer of 1868 the war had got so hot that the Union League called for help from the Federal Government; and General J. J. Reynolds on August 27, 1868, issued the following reward:

**\$3,000 REWARD**

Headquarters Fifth Military District.  
State of Texas  
Austin, Texas, August 27, 1868  
Special Order No. 16  
(Extract)

A reward of one thousand dollars cash will be paid for the delivery of the following persons to the Post Commander at Austin or Marshall, Texas:

**B. F. BICKERSTAFF**  
**CULLEN BAKER**  
**BOB LEE.**

By Command of Brevet Major General  
J. J. Reynolds

C. E. MORSE.

First Lieutenant, Twenty-sixth United States Infantry, Aide-de-Camp, Acting Assistant Adjutant General.

Official:

C. E. Morse, First Lieutenant Twenty-sixth United States Infantry, Aide-de-Camp, Acting Assistant Adjutant General.

On August 11, 1868, Major General J. J. Reynolds issued orders to Lt. Charles A. Vernou to visit northwestern Texas "with a view of obtaining information with reference to the disturbed situation in that part of the state." Lt. Vernou followed the instructions and during the latter part of August, September, and first part of October made the inspection trip and returned to Austin. Under date of Oct. 19, 1868, he made a long written report to Gen. Reynolds which shows that in September, 1868, the federal government had the 6th U. S. Cavalry. Mr. Sands' Grove under Lt. Sands. The following is a verbatim extract of Lt. Vernou's report:

"From this point where I went to Pilot Grove, at which place I found Lieutenant Sands with a company of the 6th U. S. Cavalry. Mr. Sand's force only amounts to thirty-five men, but with this force he has done much good. He has also about fifteen citizens with him who perform all the duties of enlisted men, the government furnishing them with corn and rations. This is the stamping ground of the desperado Bob Lee and his party, who have run the men that were with Lieut. Sands away from their homes. Lee seems to be the

most popular man in this section of the country, and I am sure that the citizens of that neighborhood would not only give him all the aid in their power, but will even help him with force of arms if necessary."

Lieut. Sands undoubtedly made an accurate survey and estimate of the feelings of the citizens in this section known as the "Five County Corners." The Lieutenant from a hostile viewpoint came to the conclusion that Bob Lee was "the most popular" man in this section of the country. The writer lived at one time on the edge of his territory, and in his opinion ninety per cent of the yeomanry of the country sympathized with Bob Lee. Those citizens that took the other side were branded in the popular phraseology of the day with the most opprobrious epithet that could be hurled at a southern man, "scalawag."

Cullen M. Baker was killed in the edge of Louisiana near Jefferson on January 6, 1869; Ben Bickerstaff was killed in Alvarado, Texas, on April 5, 1869 (see Frontier Times, Vol. 2, No. 1) and Bob Lee was killed in the early part of June, 1869. The government was making no progress with the capture of Lee, and he and his men were plucking off the Peacock crowd with such frequency that the urgent call was issued by the Union League for help. The \$1,000 reward for the capture of Bob Lee had had practically no effect. Troop A, 6th U. S. Cavalry served at Pilot Grove from January to March, 1869. The forces were under the command of Lieutenant Theodore Maytheny and H. P. Eakin. The forces were withdrawn about the latter part of March and had practically had no effect upon quelling the disturbance or stopping the activities of Bob Lee and his men. The Federal forces were withdrawn and returned to Sulphur Springs or to Marshall.

The \$1,000 reward was still hanging over the head of Bob Lee, and it attracted the cupidity of the Kansas "Red Legs." Three of them came to Pilot Grove, dressed as citizens, and laid plans to capture Bob Lee or kill him to obtain the \$1,000 reward. Lee was on perpetual guard and would not sleep at his house, but slept in the heart of the Wild Cat Thicket in a small shack