

**Some People Were Intelligent and Moral:
Brazos County in the News, 1822-1860 - Introduction**
compiled by Bill Page

Researchers are fortunate that Brazos County has never had a courthouse fire. Although the official records are a rich source of information, cases exist where more data is needed. In other locales, newspapers fill in many gaps. Unfortunately, the first Brazos County paper was not published until the 1860s; worse yet, few issues of any local newspaper survive until 1889. However, scattered references concerning this county appear in papers published elsewhere.

This work collects all the articles concerning early Brazos County found so far. Though there are fewer stories than one might have hoped, that Brazos County was mentioned at all is surprising, for it was a small county, isolated between two rivers. In 1850 there were only 614 people living here. By 1860 that number had risen to 3,096, but by any measure, the county was still sparsely settled.

Many items are legal notices. The law said required that certain court proceedings be advertised. If no newspaper were published in a given county, then such notices had to be placed in a paper published nearby. Before the Civil War, "nearby" could be as far away as Austin or Houston. Most legal notices for Brazos County were estray notices. Texas laws dictated that people advertise when they found any stray "horse, mare, colt, mule, jack, or jenny," as well as "cattle, hogs, sheep, or goats." The prevalence of estray notices reflects the fact that early Brazos County was an agrarian county, with no communities of any size and few businesses, churches or schools.

Other legal notices concern estates, runaway slaves and divorce proceedings. Additional stories included political news, as well as a scattering of obituaries. Other topics included ongoing efforts to navigate the Brazos River and progress on building the Houston and Texas Central Railroad.

There is some hope that continuing efforts to microfilm and digitize early newspapers will lead to the discovery of additional articles concerning Brazos County, but for now, the author presents this work for the reader's use, flawed and incomplete though it is.