

## Oxford Lake

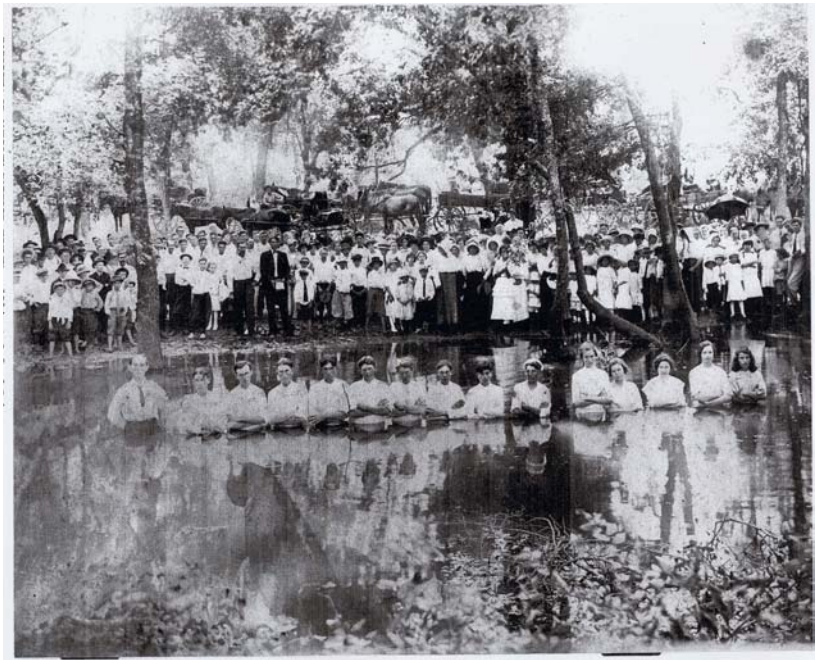
### Brush Battalion Camp

### During the the Civil War

Oxford Lake was a camp for the Confederate Brush Battalion during the Civil War. Oxford Lake was near the juncture of Indian Creek and Pilot Grove Creek, three miles northwest of Farmersville, Collin County. Oxford Lake was the site of a 1914 baptism for the **Antioch Baptist Church**, two miles east at Oxford Lake in the Boggy Community. Ola (**Tyner**) **Spain** is the 5th person from the right in the water.

#### brush battalion

The term “brush battalion” was loosely used for the irregular soldiers. Many had joined a militia company, but the militia did not represent a final choice of sides of the conflict (Union or Confederate), for they were temporary units. With their dissolution, the enrollees, if they were of conscription age, had to either volunteer for service in a permanent outfit, be drafted, or flee. In the summer of 1862 the North Texas Confederates began enforcing the conscription act. Immediately, hundreds fled into the brush, bush, thickets, or creek bottoms.



Kirby **Smith**, to flush “men in the bush.” An agreement between the Northern Sub-District command and the Confederate authorities was reached on or about the 26th day of October, 1863 for bringing the brush battalion into the service of the Confederate States to protect the frontier of north and west Texas.

The “Last Day of Voluntary Amnesty” circular was printed in Paris, Lamar County and posted throughout the Northern Sub-District of Texas prior to the November 6, 1863 muster of some of the brush battalion into the Confederate Army.

**November 5th, 1863**

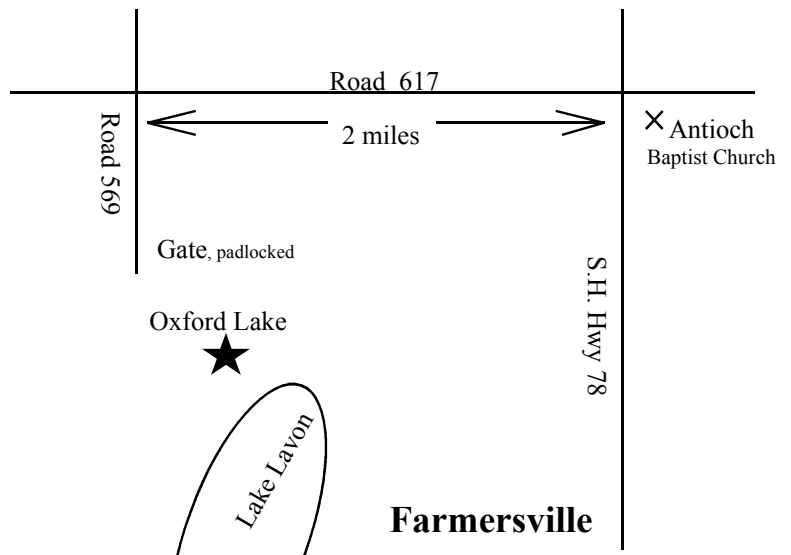
### Last Day of Voluntary Amnesty

No deserters will be permitted to remain in this Sub-District. It may be well to say that the policy of pardoning deserters, has worked badly, has injured the service, and must be stopped; and that those so lost to honor as to desert, need expect to find no shelter in this Sub-District, all will be hunted down and brought to justice.

Brigadier General Henry E. McCulloch

#### Henry Boren

One batch of the brush battalion was led by **Henry Boren**, who had deserted John K. **Bumpass**’ Company of Lt. Colonel Leonidas M. **Martin**’s 5th Partisan Rangers, then ironically, later **Martin** was the Confederate enrolling officer for **Boren** and his followers. **Boren**



General Henry E. **McCulloch** saw the bush men as a much needed force to supplement frontier defense in his sub-district. His attitude toward pardoning deserters was: “soft words are better than hard ones to bring the young ones back to their duty,” which attracted some of the bush men to voluntarily sign up for service. He hired **Quantrill’s Raiders**, at the insistence of Gen. Edmund

brought about 500 men out of the bush of the Collin County area to enroll in the Confederate Brush Battalion, which was assigned to Major John R. **Diamond**, who already had five (5) companies in his command. McCulloch was surprised that **Diamond**, a very good officer by all accounts, had a colossal number of deserters. The Confederate Brush Battalion muster listing header reads:

“The **Brush Battalion**, of the Confederate Army was organized for frontier service November 6, 1863, with five companies. The Battalion was composed of deserters, conscripts and militia, who had taken to the brush to escape arrest by the **conscript officers**. They had been collected upon the promise that they would be pardoned and utilized on the frontier as a protection from Indians who were hostile.”

Brig-General H. E. **McCulloch** wrote a November 1863 letter to Lt. Colonel James **Bourland** that cites **Oxford Lake** where where the Confederate Brush Battalion of over 500 men was camped. McCulloch reported that they were without supplies and equipment.

The Confederate Brush Battalion evidently also met on “December 12, 1863 at Bonham” and prepared a listing that we expect to locate.

#### **Another batch of the Confederate Brush Battalion**

Captain John Henry **Dameron** of Dulaney's Caney Creek Mounted Infantry of Texas State Troops was ordered in July 1863 to raise a company for the 1st Texas Cavalry at the Warren Supply Depot, Fannin County in the command of Colonel Peter **Hardeman**'s Arizona Brigade. In August 1863, Pvt. Joshua **Coffee** and 24 pickets were sent to Colbert's Ferry north of present Denison, Grayson County to help defend against a perceived Union invasion of North Texas along the Texas Road (now U.S. Hwy 69). Some of these pickets were listed as deserters and were assigned on November 6, 1863 to Major J. R. **Diamond**'s Confederate Brush Battalion at Oxford Lake. Interestingly, the 1st Texas Cavalry was reorganized in March 1864 and placed in Indian Territory in Gen. Samuel B. Maxey's Division, District of Arkansas.

#### **Confederate Brush Battalion gained legitimacy**

The Confederate Brush Battalion gained legitimacy by being asked in December 1863 to “fill the line” of defense against the Comanches who were gathering on the South

Canadian River in Indian Territory according to Colonel James **Bourland**'s scouts. They did not get into position (a 75-mile span) since they were in Denton County waiting for Lt. James W. S. **Merchant** to procure supplies for them. The Comanches attacked North Texas on December 22nd, 1863 in the bloodiest and most destructive raids in Texas history.

#### **After the December 23, 1863 raid into North Texas**

What happened to the Confederate Brush Battalion after the December 23, 1863 Comanche Raid into North Texas? Interestingly, the 1st Texas Cavalry was reorganized in March 1864 and sent to Indian Territory in Gen. Samuel B. **Maxey**'s Division, District of Arkansas then were probably attached to that part of Bourland's Regiment that was commanded by Col. L. M. **Martin** while the remainder was commanded by Lt-Col. J. R. **Diamond** after February 10, 1865. Several of the Confederate Brush Battalion enrolled in Bourland's Regiment.

*Editor's note:* References: *The Bourland Papers* from the Library of Congress; David Paul Smith's *Frontier Defense in the Civil War, Texas Rangers and Rebels, 1861-1865*, pp80-85; *Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations Raised Directly by the Confederate Government*, National Archives microfilms M-258-73, -74, and -75; plus Orders and Circulars, Dept. of Texas, 1861-1864, Confederate Record 109, National Archives.

My website, [www.bourlandcivilwar.com](http://www.bourlandcivilwar.com), describes my 1,014-page book: *Bourland in North Texas and Indian Territory During the Civil War: Fort Cobb, Fort Arbuckle & the Wichita Mountains*. Patricia Adkins-Rochette, 580-252-2094, [prochette@Juno.com](mailto:prochette@Juno.com).