

A neighborhood Christmas party from one hundred and thirty years ago is described in the old newspaper story recopied below. Unfortunately, the exact location of the "Prairie School house" remains unknown to me, though I suspect it was at the old 'La Reunion' town site (just west of where modern Hampton Road crests the escarpment — still a dramatic view). At least two of the celebrants are identifiable. One of the performers of the string band is J. T. Duncan, who came to Texas in the fall of 1874. John Duncan owned a nearby farm and in 1888 he would buy widow Mary Stevens' farmhouse (modern Middlebrook place). Duncans and Stevens families acted as pallbearers at each other's family funerals. The second person mentioned in this 1876 Christmas account is Dr. W.H. Armstrong, the unmarried brother of Mary Armstrong Stevens. He would be killed in a traffic accident in 1885. It is easy for me to imagine the rest of the Stevens family meeting at this party too. It would be the last Christmas that Dr. William Armstrong's mother, Eliza Armstrong, would be alive. Mary Armstrong Stevens and Dr. John H. Stevens had been living here at their farmhouse for about five years. Their son Walter would have been two years old, and their daughter Annie L. Stevens would have been just a bit older than one. Jim Barnes

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Christmas Day at the Prairie School house

Perhaps the readers of The Herald would like to know how we spend Christmas in the country. I will try therefore to give a faint outline of the pleasure we experienced in the late celebration of that day at our Mecca, the "Prairie School house". This building is a substantial frame situated some five miles west of Dallas on the mountain and commands a view of the city and surrounding country.

On Christmas day everybody and their friends assembled to partake of a dinner given by the hospitable Temperance Society of that neighborhood. They all came with the intention of enjoying a pleasant day and I assure you that purpose was happily achieved.

But to return to the subject, at about ten o'clock a.m. the crowd began to gather from all directions and we grangers were pleased to see many of our friends from the city. Some of these came because they loved the country, others because they loved the girls who live in the country, and who can blame them? There were candidates too, to enliven the day by their pleasant faces and hearty hand-shakes. One of these, Robert H. West, our County Judge that is to be; W.I. Cummings, candidate for the office of surveyor of Dallas County was also present.

While we were patiently waiting for two o'clock (the dinner hour) the gentlemen favored us with short addresses suited to the occasion and between times we listened to the most excellent music from the string band. The performers were J.T. Duncan and others from the country and Maj. Terry of Dallas.

And the dinner: I am sorry the editor of The Herald was not there to do justice to the good things of the day. I am satisfied from his looks that he would have been equal to the occasion. I will not attempt to describe it. I can only say that it was good and plentiful. Dear ladies, I thank you for that dinner!

After our physical tastes were satisfied, our mental tastes were again appealed to. Dr. W.H. Armstrong delivered a temperance address, handling his address in a very able manner. This gentleman has put his heart and soul into his word and though some of us may differ as to the means, yet we bid him "God speed!"

After Dr. Armstrong's address, Miss Angie Fleming read an essay on the same subject. Young men, how can <you> resist so fair a pleader?

After this music by the band and our pleasant day ended. May we have many more like it.

B.G.B.

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